BOLIVIA'S LEFTIST VICTORY

The Nation.

GAY COWBOYS, QUEER KONG
Richard Goldstein

WHITE HOUSE WATCHDOGS OR LAPDOGS?
Eric Alterman

THE GEOPOLITICS OF NATURAL GAS
Michael T. Klare

THE BAUDELAIRE OF THE LOWER EAST SIDE
John Palattella

THE CASE AGAINST ALITO

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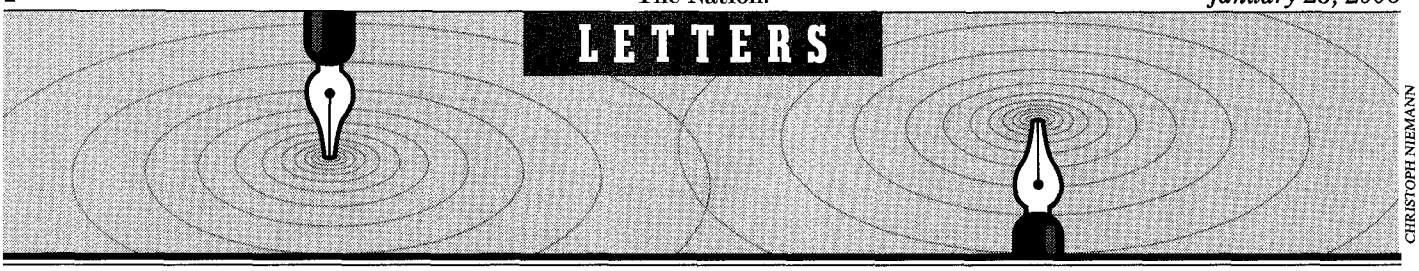

CHRISTOPH NIEMANN

INDEX FOR OUR TIMES

Northampton, Mass.

■ John S. Friedman's "The Iraq Index" [Dec. 19] used research on military recruitment done by the National Priorities Project, but cited the *Washington Post* (which ran a lengthy front-page article based on our study) as the source. We invite *Nation* readers to our website and online database (nationalpriorities.org), where they can look up numbers on military recruits by their ZIP code, county, school or state and find out related demographic information.

ANITA DANCS, *research director*
National Priorities Project

FIDDLING ON THE ROOF?

Morris Plains, NJ

■ Where does Daniel Lazare get the idea that Sholem Aleichem's Tevye "despises the United States" ["The Chosen People," Dec. 19]? If it is from Yuri Slezkine's book *The Jewish Century*, both of them are wrong. Tevye prefers to immigrate to Palestine rather than to the United States, but his plans are canceled because of the death of his son-in-law. Sholem Aleichem certainly did not despise the United States. He lived his last years here, and his last book, *Motl the Cantor's Son*, expresses great affection for America. BENNETT MURASKIN

LAZARE REPLIES

New York City

■ If Bennett Muraskin would take another look at the Tevye tales, he'd find that the references to the United States are uniformly negative. In one story Efrayim the matchmaker complains of winding up "with a gangster for a son-in-law. He beat my daughter black and blue and ran away with all her money to America." In another, Tevye is outraged when his own son-in-law, a crooked government contractor, tries to ship him off to the New World. But then the contractor goes bankrupt and, taking Tevye's daughter, has to flee instead. As Tevye tells it, "he had to run for dear life from his creditors...and light out for never-never land—I mean for America, where else do all the hard-luck cases go? And don't think they had it easy there, either. They ran out of what little money was left, and when the larder was empty they had to go to work—and I do mean work, the worst sort of slave labor, just like we Jews did in Egypt, both him and her! Lately, she writes, things are looking up, thank God; they're both making socks in a sweatshop and doing well; which means in America that they're breaking their backs to keep the wolf from the door."

This is America as a place for gangsters, chiselers and super-exploited workers. Hardly the Promised Land, I'd say, despite *Fiddler on the Roof*'s depiction of Tevye as a kind of Jewish Pilgrim. Instead of saying Tevye despised America, perhaps we can compromise and say that his attitude was one of pronounced dislike. DANIEL LAZARE

PRE-RING CYCLIST

New Paltz, NY

■ In his engaging review of three books about the Joe Louis–Max Schmeling fight ["The Ring Cycle," Dec. 5], Gerald Early makes an oft-cited claim that Louis was the "first major crossover sports hero in America." However, in 1901 a 22-year-old black American bicycle racer, Marshall "Major" Taylor, became a domestic and international superstar when he went to Europe and dominated the best bicycle racers in the world. Taylor came at a time when bicycle racing was more popular than baseball, boxing or horse racing. He is one of the first black athletes to write, in 1928, his autobiography, *The Fastest Bicycle Rider in the World: The Story of a Colored Boy's Indomitable Courage and Success Against Great Odds*. PETER KAUFFMAN

AH YEZ, I REMEMBAIR EET WELL

Oakland, Calif.

■ As one who grew up in the *cités* (Bondy, smack in the middle of the 93) from which sprang the recent riots in France, I wish to correct Doug Ireland's assertion in "Why Is France Burning?" [Nov. 28] that the *cités* were "specifically built for [immigrant workers] and deliberately placed out of sight." The *cités* were built to house the very French working-class *familles nombreuses* of the post–World War II baby boom. And they were placed where there was room for them, mostly in the truck garden periphery of big cities, close to industrial jobs. As to the "sinister" atmosphere of some of them, it owed more to the patronizing egomania of Modernist architects—disciples of Le Corbusier to a man—than to failures of upkeep. In fact, every time I revisit my old haunts, I'm struck by their spruceness compared with US housing projects: the fresh paint, the landscaped grounds, the public swimming pools, the *médiathèques*.

It is not the ugliness of their environment or the lack of "social programs" that alienates these young men. It is a mixture of racism/classism (although classism by itself used to do just as neat a job), acculturation, normal youth malaise, the underestimated influence of American hip-hop, identification with oppressed Palestinians, resentment over the (still denied) brutality of the French colonial past, etc. But mostly it's the economy. As the so-called industrialized countries have been busy outsourcing industry, then service, for the past thirty years, they have left behind a growing class of people for whom there are no respectable jobs. Today the "visible minorities," tomorrow you and me.

DOMINIQUE PFAFF

IRELAND REPLIES

New York City

■ Dominique Pfaff is, I'm afraid, simply wrong on the facts. While there was some housing built for white working-class baby boomers in the late 1940s and early '50s, most of it was in or close to the urban centers—unlike the *cités* of which I wrote, which were built in the 1950s and '60s to replace the horrifying *bidonvilles*, or shantytowns, in which the primarily North African workers were forced to live, both by racism (which prevented their renting decent housing) and by poverty (they could rarely afford it even when landlords would rent to them). The quality of life in those human garbage dumps has been bitterly and eloquently portrayed in the novels of Azuz Begag, the sociologist who grew up in one of them near Marseilles.

The colonial Algerian war, whose violence had come home to continental France, was another reason to keep these workers penned up away from the center cities before Algeria's independence. There are some 270 such deliberately ghettoized *cités* throughout France, built shoddily on the cheap by private contractors—like the largest of them, the giant influence-buying Bouygues—who bought this lucrative government work with secret, black-bag campaign contributions that financed all the major parties, left and right (a sordid history that dominated newspaper headlines throughout the 1990s, when these institutionalized corruption ripoffs finally became public and indictments fell like rain). No wonder these ghettos became so rapidly dilapidated, unrepairable and uninhabitable that the first razings of them began in the late 1970s (even then, many of their replacements weren't much better—for the same reasons).

The policy to hide the darker-skinned workers by warehousing them in those repulsive high-rise towers away from the white urban agglomerations was so obviously racist that it was described as "urban apartheid" by the architect and urbanist Roland Castro—a leader of the May '68 student rebellion who later became President François Mitterrand's urban adviser—in his 1994 book *Civilisation urbaine ou barbarie*, which contains a detailed account of their construction.

Pfaff's idyllic portrait of these ghettos is as

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EDITORIALS

The Case Against Alito

With Judge Samuel Alito, the Senate Judiciary Committee faces its most consequential Supreme Court confirmation hearing in a generation. Not since Robert Bork has the Senate encountered a nominee whose long record and fully articulated views so consistently challenge decades of progress on privacy, civil rights and control of corporations. And never in memory has a single nomination so threatened to redirect the Court as Alito's, which would replace the pragmatically conservative swing-voter Sandra Day O'Connor. Alito's opening statement before the Judiciary Committee is January 9, but his true testimony consists of fifteen years of rulings on issues from abortion to school prayer to immigration. That record demonstrates that Alito is at odds with the interests of ordinary Americans.

Supreme Court nominees get, and usually deserve, much benefit of the doubt. But with Alito, the doubt is all of the nominee's making, and has only grown with revelations of his Reagan-era memos. As an ambitious Reagan Administration lawyer, he boasted in a now-famous 1985 job application of his conviction that *Roe v. Wade* should be overturned; opposed the historic one-person, one-vote decision of the Warren Court; and waved like a badge of honor his membership in a far-right Princeton alumni network notorious for its hostility to admitting women and African-Americans. Alito's defense of Nixon-era officials implicated in illegal wiretaps makes clear—in light of today's NSA wiretap scandal—that the Bush Administration's motives in Alito's nomination extend well beyond a token nod to social conservatives.

Nothing in Alito's hundreds of federal appeals court rulings in the years since suggests any mellowing of those fundamental commitments. After a careful study, University of Chicago law professor Cass Sunstein described Alito's record of appeals court dissents as "stunning. Ninety-one percent of Alito's dissents take positions more conservative than his colleagues...including colleagues appointed by Presidents Bush and Reagan." A new study by the Alliance for Justice makes the case even more emphatically: In so-called split decisions—the most difficult cases, which divided the appeals court—"Alito has frequently gone to the right of even his Republican-appointed colleagues to find against individuals claiming that government officials or corporations violated the law." He has argued strenuously in favor of the strip search of a 10-year-old girl not accused of criminal wrongdoing; supported warrantless surveillance of a criminal suspect when other courts had disallowed the practice; and tried to strip his fellow judges of the power to grant habeas corpus rights to undocumented immigrants, a position pointedly repudiated by the Supreme Court.

This is big-government jurisprudence with a vengeance. The only exception to Alito's big-government activism comes with the regulation of business. There he seems to be on a one-man crusade to undo decades of regulation, most clearly displayed in a still-astounding dissent arguing that the federal ban on machine guns violates the Constitution's commerce clause—a radical position (exceeding even Chief Justice John Roberts's famously constricted view of the Endangered Species Act) that would shred not only gun-control statutes but a host of environmental laws and other Congressional action.

Democrats as well as moderate Republicans have so far played their cards close. Will the handful of Democratic progressives who voted for the confirmation of Roberts—including Russell Feingold and Patrick Leahy—see themselves as free to oppose a

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nominee without Roberts's discretion about his own commitments? Will the party discipline so often exercised by minority leader Harry Reid extend to what is certain to be an emotional confirmation fight? Will civil-libertarian Republicans like Arlen Specter recognize in Alito not just a threat to *Roe v. Wade* but to the fundamental balance of executive and legislative power? And what about the "Gang of 14," the Republican and Democratic senators like Joe Lieberman and John McCain who last year agreed to avoid judicial filibusters except in rare circumstances? They should recall that a key principle uniting them then was that the White House should consult the Senate on judicial appointments; on Alito, the White House consulted no one but the extreme right.

The White House is banking on fear that if this second nominee goes down, Bush will nominate someone even worse. This argument ignores history: When in 1969–70 President Nixon nominated and lost both Clement Haynsworth and Harrold Carswell, the result was not "someone worse" but the pragmatic, humane Judge Harry Blackmun, who later wrote *Roe v. Wade*; when Bork was Borked, his replacement was Anthony Kennedy, who in 1992 joined fellow Reagan nominee O'Connor to reaffirm *Roe*. Alito defeatism also ignores today's political climate: As the midterm elections draw closer, as the Iraq War scandals deepen, Senate Republicans are falling over one another to distance themselves from the Administration and the far right.

Alito will undoubtedly try to backpedal from his unambiguous track record. That only makes more urgent the case against the real Alito revealed in his memos and rulings. The American people are not ready for a nominee so profoundly committed to intrusive government, whether that means right-to-lifers intruding on sexual privacy, religious fanatics intruding in the science classroom or the NSA intruding on phone calls without a warrant. Far from being a mainstream conservative, Judge Alito represents a malignant future; his entire biography suggests he will swing the Supreme Court toward a right-wing authoritarianism that's out of step with the public and the Constitution.

COMMENT

Ruling Class Warriors

Many Americans spent the week before Christmas thinking about their neediest fellow citizens. But in Washington this year, something rather different took place. In the middle of the night on December 19, members of the House of Representatives were presented with a 774-page budget reconciliation bill, written behind closed doors by Republicans, less than five hours before they had to vote on it. The legislation, which passed the House by 212 to 206 and the Senate by 51 to 50 (Vice President Dick Cheney rushed back from Pakistan to break the tie), includes $40 billion in reductions to various domestic programs over the next five years, ostensibly to balance the budget but in reality to make way for yet another round of tax cuts for the rich.

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COMMENT

Who will have to suffer? Medicaid recipients, to begin with, since the budget allows states to impose premiums and increase co-payments—as high as 10 percent of the cost of a medical service—on low-income Americans. For a $1,000 hospital stay, this could mean $100 in out-of-pocket costs, a change that may sound minor but is sure to be profound. In 2003, when Oregon began charging slightly higher co-payments ($5 a doctor's visit) and premiums for Medicaid recipients, 40,000 swiftly dropped out of the program. "We thought the premiums were relatively small," a state official told the *New York Times*, "but for people with very low incomes, they proved to be significant."

Congress could instead have reduced the amount Medicaid pays pharmaceutical companies for prescription drugs, as an earlier Senate version actually did, which would have saved $10.5 billion over ten years. Billions more could have been saved by eliminating a wasteful fund that encourages managed care companies to participate in Medicare. Neither measure was included in the reconciliation bill.

The miserliness—toward those without campaign contributions to dispense—doesn't end there. The same budget bill cuts child support enforcement and foster care programs (family values, anyone?). It slashes $13 billion over five years from student loan programs. It imposes an unrealistic 90 percent work participation rate on two-parent families receiving public assistance, with no allowance for workers who are ill, who must take care of a sick child or who simply can't find a thirty-five-hour-a-week job. At the same time, it leaves states with $11 billion less than what the Congressional Budget Office calculates they'll need to meet work requirements and provide low-income citizens with childcare. The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities estimates that 255,000 fewer kids from struggling families will be receiving childcare assistance by 2010.

That Republicans had the nerve to ram through such a budget a week before Christmas vividly illustrates that when it comes to so-called class warfare, it is the right that is on the offensive. In their book *Off Center*, Jacob Hacker and Paul Pierson argue that Republicans are able to promote such an agenda not because the country hankers to return to the Gilded Age but because they mask the plutocratic effects of their policies. Will Republicans get away with it this time? The House will have to approve the budget one more time, probably in late January. House minority leader Nancy Pelosi has made it clear that Democrats will stand united against the draconian cuts. To prevail, they'll need moderate Republicans who supported the legislation when it was last voted upon—among them Christopher Shays, Nancy Johnson, Rob Simmons and John Sweeney—to reverse course.

These and other Republicans ought to consider the context. In a speech delivered four months ago from Jackson Square in New Orleans, George W. Bush spoke of the "duty" we have to confront the "deep, persistent poverty" that has "cut off generations from the opportunity of America." At the time, Hurricane Katrina had shocked the conscience of millions of Americans by casting stark images of poverty—which has increased for four straight years—into their living rooms. The number of people living in extreme poverty is the highest ever recorded since the Census Bureau began tracking such data three decades ago. While tax cuts are showered on millionaires, 45.8 million Americans don't have health insurance. Perhaps this is why moderates who once gave Bush the benefit of the doubt for caring about the plight of the less fortunate harbor no such illusions anymore.

"The Administration has hammered the final nail in the coffin of compassionate conservatism with this vote," said Jim Wallis of Sojourners. "And now our political leaders will race out of town, join their families, celebrate good fortune and hope, and proclaim goodwill toward all. Merry Christmas!" Let's assume some members of Congress didn't read the fine print in the budget bill the first time around—after all, that was the GOP aim. They'll have no excuse this time. EYAL PRESS

Eyal Press is a Nation *contributing writer.*

Of Queers & Kong

SPECTACLE

Jay Leno, the zeitgeist diviner of late-night talk, regaled his audience recently with mock footage of a "cameo" from a hot new film. There were Jack and Ennis, the cowboy lovers from *Brokeback Mountain*, in a fevered clinch, while King Kong sniffed the air around them with evident interest. Though this montage tapped into the nasty equation of gay love and animal behavior, it also faced the unsettling fact that our most cherished icons of masculinity are being queered—at least in the movies.

But just how queer are the greatest ape and those two vaqueros? That depends on what queer is. If the term means homosexual, it has everything to do with *Brokeback Mountain* and nothing to do with *King Kong*. There isn't the slightest hint in this remake that the world's most famous alpha is into guys. But director Peter Jackson has changed the relationship between Kong and his human captive in a way that is very queer, indeed. Heterosexual they may be, but this pair is utterly outside the norm.

Both films are sagas of doomed love. In *Kong* it's the bond between a yearning animal and a helpless woman; in *Brokeback* it's a secret gay affair set in the mid-century American West. Of these two scenarios the closet drama is certainly more gripping, thanks largely to Annie Proulx's powerful story and Ang Lee's unsparing direction. *Brokeback Mountain* makes the cruelty of homophobia unmistakable and the consequences of passing for straight painfully clear. And everything you've heard about Heath Ledger's performance as the more locked-up lover is true: His face is a map of deprivation. In the context of their time and place these male lovers are certainly queer, but seen in the present their story seems oddly conventional. That's because it conforms to our current assumptions about homosexuality.

Take the fact that both Jack and Ennis had brutal, distant fathers. It's a devastating critique of patriarchal culture, but it also echoes the fashionable fundamentalist idea that disapproving dads make deviant sons. No wonder the Christian right has been so muted in its objections to this film; some of their websites even praise its loving values, while adding (as a protective afterthought)

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COMMENT

that the relationship itself is repugnant. Not that *Brokeback* is a brief for reparative therapy. It soundly rejects the idea that the sexuality of these men is subject to change. It makes their gayness fully comprehensible—you might say Heath legible—and that lays the groundwork for a certain kind of empathy.

Many women (and not a few gay men) will see in Ennis a recognizable type: the man who needs you to break through his armor, though you can't. This shared perception is the key to a gay film's success in the mass marketplace. And as *Brokeback*'s producer has said, women are its target audience. Perhaps it's an aspect of female de-repression, or a sign of the shifting sexual order, but many women enjoy watching gay characters—and not just on *Will & Grace*. Homo soaps rule the airwaves in Thailand, and in Japan comic books featuring gay romances are bestsellers thanks to girls. One thing about these homo heroes is that no matter how flexible they are, they're really, really gay. All sorts of problems are solved, and anxieties quelled, by making homosexuality innate and essential. Even the ads for *Brokeback Mountain* affirm this idea of a fixed gay identity—as in "Love is a force of nature."

The love in *Kong* is impossible in nature. It can exist only in the queerest regions of the pysche, where human and animal selves may merge. But even the subconscious changes, and in order to modernize this beloved but bigoted tale Peter Jackson has had to alter its underlying assumptions about white male power. He can't dislodge the story's racist core, but its sexism proves more malleable. In the original all the captive woman did was scream, but in this remake she bonds with Kong—and that crucial change turns a classic affirmation of the sexual order into a saga of awakening.

The ape, whose life is an endless battle for supremacy, discovers a new feeling through his love for Anne Darrow: delight. And the mighty primate's loyalty unleashes Darrow's own suppressed power. This transference is represented in the film's most moving scenes: the sunset idyll, when she stands by Kong's side, her popping muscles gleaming in the pink light; and the midnight romp through Central Park, when Kong glides along an icy pond on his furry rear with Darrow in his lap. As "he" falls to his famous death, she hesitates for a crucial moment before leaping into the arms of her human fiancé, and in that space between her destiny and her imagination the system that contains her is suspended. Of course, the moment doesn't last: Boys and girls, this is a tragedy!

The suspension of sexual categories, tentative as it may be, makes *King Kong* more ambitious than *Brokeback Mountain*, though it's hardly as accomplished a work of art. But the most notable thing is the way both films see the world. It's a brutal, unforgiving place in which love outside the norm struggles to be something more than a self-destructive gesture. That's as true in our time as it was in cowboy country a generation ago or during the Depression, when *Kong* is set. Explanations for sexuality change, but queerness remains. RICHARD GOLDSTEIN

Richard Goldstein writes about the connections among pop culture, politics and sexuality.

CALVIN TRILLIN

THE PRESIDENT'S MEASURED RESPONSE TO CRITICISM OF HIS SECRET DOMESTIC SPYING OPERATION

Since I am Commander in Chief,
My powers to spy or debrief
Are limitless. That's my belief.
So go somewhere else with your beef.
I'll do what I want when I want to.

Since terror is not like croquet,
The NSA does what I say.
Despite your soft-headed dismay,
My Nanny Dick says it's OK.
I'll do what I want when I want to.

Security trumps, that's for sure.
And I get to say who's secure.
And laws and court warrants obscure
My mission. And I will endure!
I'll do what I want when I want to.

Hunger Is Not a Place

"Within a decade no man, woman or child will go to bed hungry," declared Henry Kissinger.

That was three decades ago.

Since then hunger fighters have periodically reminded us of our failure—most recently *Time* magazine Person of the Year Bono, Jeffrey Sachs (*The End of Poverty*) and the Make Poverty History campaign. Such impassioned calls again and again rally us to believe that, yes, we can end hunger. Yet sadly, they fail to challenge the very frame blinding us to solutions.

In that frame we in the industrial countries have the answer—what Sachs celebrates as the "dynamism of self-sustaining economic growth"—and our job is to help the poor get their "foot on the ladder." But hunger is not a residual problem to fix "over there"—a place, mainly in Africa, left off this hunger-ending ladder. Rather, hunger is a global system that we're all part of. This hunger-making system is alive in Africa, where one in three people goes hungry, but it is also alive in the United States, where hunger has grown by 43 percent over the past five years, and close to one young child in five lives in a family so poor he or she can't count on getting needed nourishment. The system is very much alive in Asia and Latin America, too.

Yet our frame determines which pieces of this picture we can

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see. We applaud, for example, India's high-tech boom and its poverty reduction. But we can't register that nearly half of India's children younger than 4 are still underweight, or that more hungry people live in India than in all of sub-Saharan Africa. We're also blind to what is happening in Kerala, the state that has been India's hunger-fighting champion—long before anyone heard of call centers or outsourcing. Kerala is invisible because it doesn't fit the frame: With per-capita wealth only average for India, Kerala has reduced infant deaths to one-quarter the national rate. The frame also blinds us to progress in Bangladesh. With a per-capita GDP less than two-thirds of India's, Bangladesh has a child death rate nearly one-fifth lower than India's.

Clearly, we need a different frame to understand and solve the problem of hunger. Hunger is not about being left outside the dominant economic system. Hunger is actively created by that system—economic life divorced from democratic values and driven by a single rule: highest return to existing wealth. Because of it, 80 percent of the world's people live in countries where inequality is worsening, and 691 billionaires have come to control as much wealth as half the world's people earn in a year. While a decade ago poor coffee-producing countries, to pick just one example, retained 30 percent of coffee revenue, their share has shrunk to less than 10 percent today. The winners aren't consumers but the Nestlés and Philip Morrises of the world, a narrowing group of global giants able to drain wealth from the poorest countries, kill the open market and consolidate power in so few hands that it inevitably corrupts political governance—whether it's in the US Congress, the Kenyan Parliament or the WTO.

Sadly, the biggest story of our time gets hidden by this dominant frame. It is a revolution in human dignity in which citizens are moving beyond protest to problem solving, risking their lives to remove the power of wealth from the political system and to infuse the power of democratic values into the economic system. The new frame they are creating I call living democracy.

With a living democracy frame for understanding hunger, it's possible to grasp at least some of the reasons Bangladesh is making faster progress in saving lives than is India, despite its greater hunger and deeper income poverty: Citizen action networks have spread to almost 80 percent of Bangladesh's villages, providing basic health training, schools and capital. Through the two biggest, the largely self-financing Grameen Bank and the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee, peer-backed micro-loans have gone to about 9 million poor people, mainly women, enabling many to birth their own village-level enterprises. Grameen reports that more than half of the families of its borrowers—the vast majority of the bank's owners—have "crossed the poverty line." Assuming BRAC's comparable impact, these rural Bangladeshis' self-directed enterprises have freed more than twice as many from poverty as the number employed in export garment factories. There, insecure jobs offer wages of 8 to 18 cents an hour. Yet the dominant frame doesn't differentiate these two paths; to Sachs, both place Bangladeshis on the economic "ladder."

In India hunger is being uprooted as well, but the real story isn't high-tech progress, so far creating only a million jobs in a country of a billion. The most meaningful breakthroughs are less flashy. In Kerala hunger is being conquered by participatory approaches that have achieved fairer access to land and education. And the People's Campaign of Decentralized Planning has trained hundreds of thousands of Kerala's citizens in budgeting and planning to create rural improvements. Throughout India women have built a network of cooperative dairies that in only three decades has lifted the incomes of more than 11 million households and benefited more than 100 million.

Similarly, Brazil's Landless Workers Movement has secured legal title to more than 20 million acres for a quarter of a million formerly landless families, creating self-governing communities whose enterprises and farms serve community-sustaining values. Infant mortality has fallen, and wages for members are many times higher than their former day-labor pay.

Hunger is caused by scarcity, that part of the dominant frame is true, but it is the scarcity of living democracy—the active engagement of citizens creating accountable institutions. Within this frame, the question becomes not Sachs's—"Will the rich world act to help save the poor" by assisting them onto the economic growth "ladder"?—but rather, How do we empower those movements here and abroad that are removing the power of private wealth from public governance and infusing the power of democratic values into economic life? FRANCES MOORE LAPPÉ

Frances Moore Lappé (www.smallplanetinstitute.org) is the author of fifteen books, including the just released Democracy's Edge.

Harry Magdoff

Harry Magdoff, who died on New Year's Day, aged 92, had been a co-editor of *Monthly Review* since 1969, a pre-eminent socialist economist and the author of a groundbreaking work, *The Age of Imperialism* (1969). At 15, he said, reading Marx blew his mind—and he never looked back, even when, after McCarthyite inquiries cost him his job in his field, he worked in the belly of the capitalist beast as a stockbroker, among other positions. Indeed, those sojourns strengthened his grasp of how the system that he meant to overturn worked. Peaceably, of course, for he was a nonviolent man.

Robert McChesney, a friend and colleague, offered his take on Magdoff: "For some reason I had the impression that Harry was an austere, angry radical intellectual. When John Bellamy Foster asked me to join him and Harry as co-editor of *Monthly Review* in 2000, I anticipated that dealing with Harry was going to be something of a pain. I found him to be one of the most gentle, unpretentious and kindest men with whom I have ever worked. Getting to know him and learn from him—and he ranks in the first tier of intellectual figures in our times—has been one of the highlights of my life. I began reading Harry Magdoff in the early 1970s, when I was still a teenager. Although his best-known work concerns the political economy of imperialism, I found his analysis of the financial sector to be original, pace-setting and convincing. In some ways Harry was like the jazz genius who by being self-educated avoided the patterns that formal training creates and

(Continued on Page 24)

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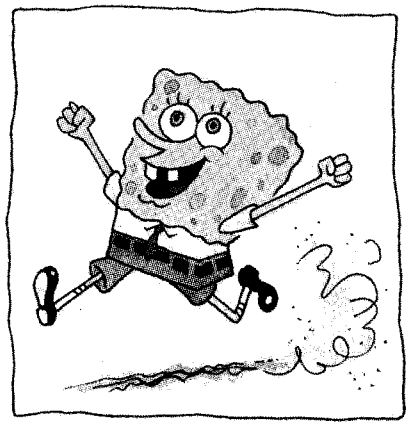
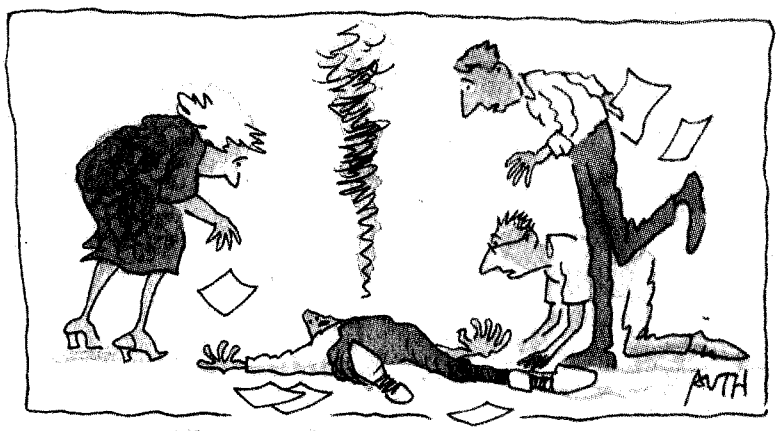
COMIX NATION

TOP NEWS STORIES OF 2006

SADDAM HUSSEIN LANDS RIGHT-WING TALK RADIO GIG.



HOLLYWOOD JURY ACQUITS SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS OF THE MURDER OF HIS COMPANION, PATRICK.



LEADING PROPONENT OF 'INTELLIGENT DESIGN' STRUCK BY LIGHTNING DURING LECTURE.

CATHOLIC CHURCH EXPELS GAY PRIESTS. PRIESTLY DUTIES OUTSOURCED TO INDIA.

GEORGE W. BUSH DECLARES VICTORY IN IRAQ... DRAWDOWN BEGINS.

Tony Auth

Tony Auth's political cartoons originate at the Philadelphia Inquirer.

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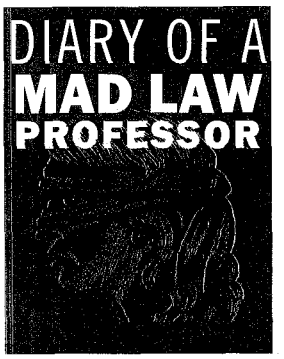
PATRICIA J. WILLIAMS

Pandora's Box



Some years ago, when "identity politics" first raised its contentious, snappish little head, the furor seemed almost entirely focused on African-Americans. The true complexity and importance of that debate, deemed largely academic at first, is perhaps increasingly clear. In recent times the world has shuddered with violent realignments unleashed by global challenges to line up with "them" or with "us," or with "truth" or with "treason." Identity is battered by varied appeals to conformity: Say it! prove it! swear allegiance to this or that nation, party, religion, bloodline of the moment—good or bad, for or against, red or blue, blue or gray, black or white, or many shades of other.

A deep planetary insecurity has fostered a rush to build boundaries around ourselves—psychic green zones, mental walls, panic rooms, little protective groupings—no matter how irrational. There's a *Boondocks* cartoon that captures the absurd tension of this moment, where young Huey excitedly tells his grandfather that there's good news abroad in the land. African-Americans are now only the third most hated group in America, he says, right after Muslims and the French. It is a bizarre phenomenon, this free-floating sense of well-being that derives comfort from being less hated rather than more loved.

As recent riots around the globe have made so clear, identities and their attendant prejudice are essentially malleable; they vary with time, trauma, culture and economics. In Australia Lebanese seem to have overtaken Aborigines as the hated minority du jour. In America Lebanese are still gilded with a stereotype of heroic middle classness—I heard someone say that "they're Arab but, um, more Christianized, you know?" In France Algerians used to be the most disfavored, now less so than Senegalese and Malians. In England it was always the Irish, but now that the Irish have become prosperous, Afro-Caribbeans and South Asians are, as one commentator put it, "the new Irish."

After the shooting of Jean Charles de Menezes—a Brazilian electrician British police mistook for a terrorist, having adjudged him "swarthy" and "Middle-Eastern looking"—observers in Brazil expressed great shock because to them he was so clearly "white." And in New Zealand, when an ethnic Iraqi student was described in the high school yearbook as "most likely to join the army as a bomb," the student responded with a sad lack of irony, "If I lived somewhere like America, I would expect a comment like that. I always thought New Zealand was quite a nice country."

But the very shiftiness of such expressions of identity means that they are in some way responsive to social stimuli. It is worth thinking about that as the extraordinary proliferation of suspect profiling starts closing in around us. I worry that it might ultimately make us less rather than more attentive to the very details that aggravate such division. Last summer, for example, shortly after the London subway bombings by four Muslim British citizens, there was a call from Tony Blair and various members of the British government for moderate Muslim leaders to renounce violence, to chide their followers, to take young men inclined to radicalism in hand at once. The public debate was awash with contradiction: Muslims don't want to mix with the culture. Then in the next breath: They blended in, which is why they slipped by without notice. Over and over I heard this perhaps unconscious tension between "Muslim" and "British"—between normative religious identity (Britain, after all, does have a state church) and citizenship.

Blair's call for mainstream Muslims to get on board was patronizing. By definition, moderate British Muslims have not embraced violence. Would suicide-minded extremists really listen to moderate imams any more than they listen to the Archbishop of Canterbury? In any event, the media flocked to mosques throughout the next week, with cameras and microphones. On the BBC and in British newspapers one saw imams and Muslim community leaders parroting Tony Blair's call for moderation. It had the quality of a performance of obedient children, speaking a script almost word for word. It was a show on many levels—and insulting in its implication that moderate Muslim leaders are at fault somehow for not taking strong stances even when they have. Distinguish yourselves, the government commanded; show us your innocence. And so they did, in the precise words Blair had used.

On broadcast after broadcast that weekend, flocks of reporters followed young Muslims out of mosques to ask what they thought. Many were very upset. They called it humiliating, a puppet exercise. On both NPR and the BBC I heard angry young men rejecting the falseness of the imprecations—but, just as ominously, I also heard many reporters recasting the responses as rejections of the message of tolerance and nonviolence. It was significant, this very small trick of language, circumstance, meaning and fear.

Recently, a white Belgian woman who had converted to a very extreme form of Islam became, with her husband, a suicide bomber in Iraq. In subsequent discussions, one heard growing fears of "white converts to Islam" and much surprise that "white Westerners" could be implicated in violence against other "white Westerners." Word is that police will be paying much more attention to "converts to Islam." This reductionism is quite disturbing. Violent, even suicidally cultic behavior—from David Koresh to Jonestown—is not unknown in Western civilization. Yet a broad new category of putative outsiders is created to explain her act. Fearing "converts to Islam" makes about as much sense as fearing Belgians.

We must fear radical orthodoxy of any stripe, not the sheep's clothing it may don. Our over-breadth will only serve to cultivate new resentments—not always violent ones. Arbitrary, even if unconscious, fragmentation of community always reinforces outsider identity rather than dispersing it, insures new levels of division and anger rather than containing them. ■

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ERIC ALTERMAN

'Fool Me Once...'

The revelations that the Bush Administration has engaged in the secret jailing and torture of people in gulag-like conditions in Eastern Europe and elsewhere while pursuing the warrantless wiretapping of Americans at home should send shivers down the spines of all who value our constitutionally protected civil liberties. Yet although the institutions that have reported on these chilling developments clearly deserve our gratitude, the manner in which they have done so nevertheless inspires suspicion and unease.

The *New York Times* held its story on domestic spying for more than a year and published it only when it became apparent that it would appear in a book by its reporter James Risen. Executive editor Bill Keller refuses to discuss his decision to delay publication, or to confirm reports that top *Times* editors were summoned to (and possibly threatened by) the White House. In light of the Justice Department's investigation into the identity of the leaker responsible for the story, this may be an understandable position. But Keller's "woefully inadequate" response to twenty-eight questions from the *Times* public editor about the case closes the much ballyhooed post–Jayson Blair era of openness and transparency at the country's most influential newspaper. Once again, *Times* editors are telling us that they know what we plebes need to know, and they'll thank us to take it and like it if we know what's good for us.

In the case of the *Washington Post*'s scoop on secret CIA prisons at old gulag sites, its editors agreed to redact the names of two of the countries involved. The *Post* article explained that this was "at the request of senior U.S. officials. They argued that the disclosure might disrupt counterterrorism efforts in those countries and elsewhere and could make them targets of possible terrorist retaliation." Like Keller, *Post* executive editor Len Downie refuses to discuss his reasoning or to address the issue of White House meetings or threats, and like Keller's, his paper faces a Justice Department investigation of the leak.

But the *Post*'s argument for withholding is weaker—the information in question was widely available elsewhere. Independently, Human Rights Watch had scoured the flight logs of airports used by the CIA for its "rendition" flights, which pointed to Poland and Romania as the sites of the secret prisons. HRW published the nations' names on its website and they appeared in publications all over the world virtually simultaneously with the *Post* story.

This game took an even odder twist when, just as Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice was about to depart for these very nations a few weeks later, ABC News investigative reporter Brian Ross discovered that the CIA appeared to be rolling up the prisons and moving the prisoners to new locations somewhere in the North African desert. This maneuver allowed Rice to deny their existence with slightly more attention to veracity than is usual for top Bush officials.

Again, the Administration leaned on the network not to name the two countries—which were by then common knowledge. Given four days to make its case, the Administration took its time, replying well past the deadline for ABC's planned broadcast of Ross's report. Just as Rice's plane was pulling its wheels up, ABC got the call they'd been waiting for asking them not to identify Poland and Romania. The executives agreed to the Administration's request.

What makes this story farcical is not only that the countries' names had already been published all over the world but that they had been published by ABC News. Even as the top ABC brass agreed to edit Ross's report to drop his direct confirmation of the two countries' identities, an audio version of his radio report was available on the ABC News website. In it he explained in a no-nonsense manner, "The Secretary of State is being asked to confirm or deny reports that the CIA established secret prisons for terrorist suspects in Poland and Romania. Current and former CIA officers tell ABC News the truthful answer is 'Yes, they did,' starting in Poland in 2002." Yet that night on *World News Tonight* as well as on *Nightline*, Ross's major scoop was played down, and the "credit" or responsibility for identifying the two countries went to Human Rights Watch rather than Ross's energetic reporting.

To be fair to ABC—and as its spokesman continuously pointed out to me—there could be no doubt in anyone's mind just which countries were hosting the torture camps. Polish and Romanian officials were questioned about the camps and issued denials, but clearly neither country has an interest in proving the President a liar—again—much less in admitting to its citizens its participation in Soviet-style secret prisons. And Ross's reporting, like that of the *Post* and the *Times*, stands out even with the cutesy avoidance of invoking the network's authority. But that only makes the willingness of ABC executives to cave in to the White House appear all the more absurd. It also sends a signal to other, less powerful media organizations that there is no sense in resisting the White House's war on the press, as it will win even when its demands make no sense.

In fact, my sources at ABC tell me that when the ABC execs agreed to the Administration's "request" not to name the two nations, they were unaware that ABC radio and ABC.com had already broadcast their names. By the time the network realized it was agreeing not to do something it had already done, everybody had become obsessed with the multimedia production of introducing the two new anchors for *World News Tonight*, Bob Woodruff and Elizabeth Vargas, which occurred that day.

Even so, the willingness of our most powerful media corporations to defer to this White House for reasons that relate far more to political embarrassment than national security is deeply disconcerting. The "secrets" in question were secret only to American news consumers. And the Bush team has repeatedly demonstrated its contempt not merely for the media but for normative standards of truth. As the saying goes, "Fool me once, shame on you..." ■

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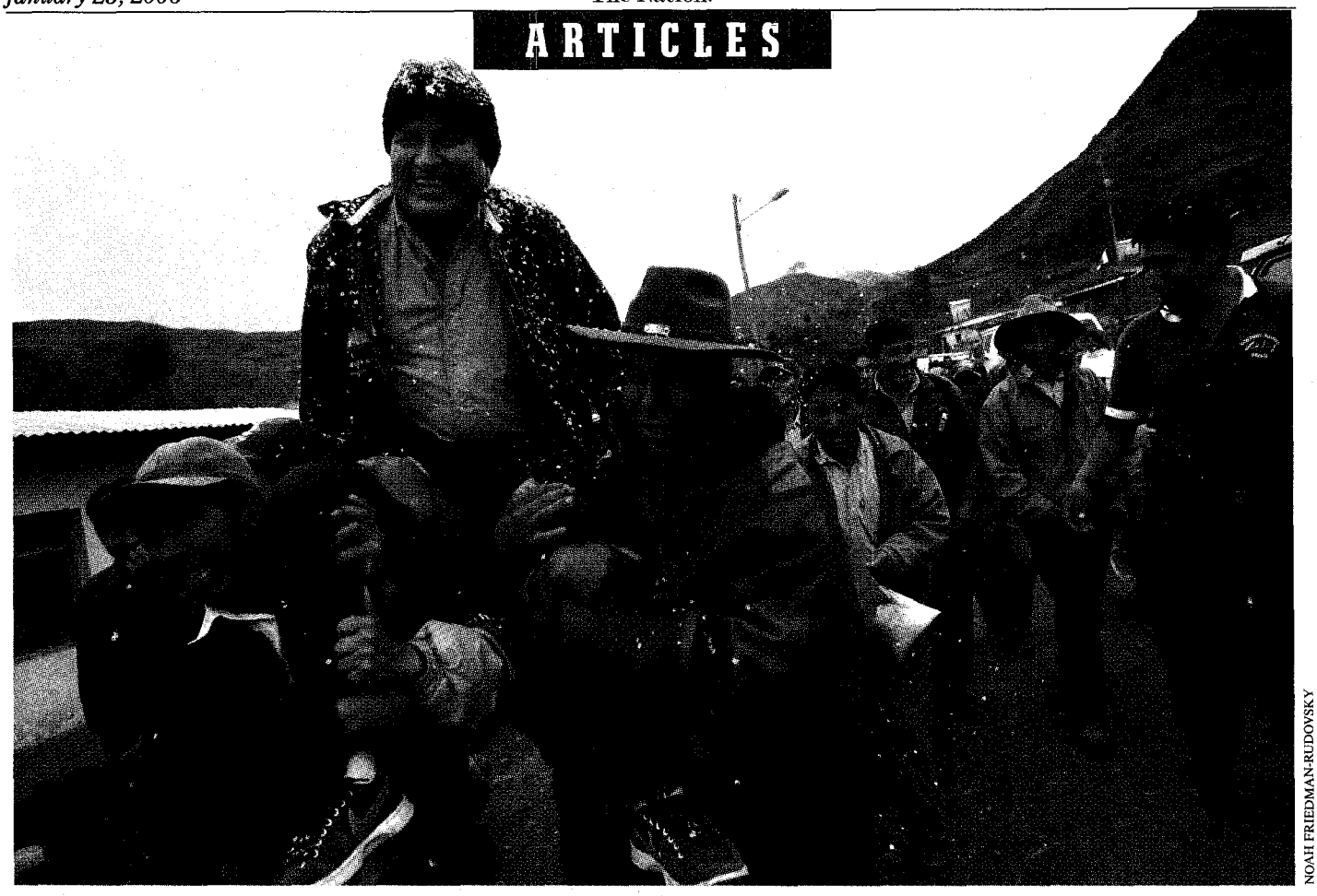

NOAH FRIEDMAN-RUDOVSKY

Evo Morales is carried on the shoulders of Quechua supporters as he enters the village of Morochata for a campaign rally

Evo's Challenge in Bolivia

DAPHNE EVIATAR

Cochabamba

In a town square set amid the rolling green highlands of the department of Cochabamba, where campesinos scrape out a living growing bananas, peppers and corn they sell for a pittance at the local market, Bolivia's president-elect, Evo Morales, last November offered a reason for hope. "You, the people who grow our food, deserve more respect," the charismatic candidate told hundreds of Quechua farmers in the town of Cliza, as community leaders showered Morales with confetti and draped wreaths of locally grown produce and flowers around his neck. "And you deserve the help of the government," he told the rapt crowd. "We will nationalize all of Bolivia's natural resources," he promised. "We will recuperate what is ours. We cannot give away what was given to us by Pachamama [Mother Earth]."

On its face, Morales's stunning December triumph would seem to be a huge victory for Bolivia's growing leftist and indigenous movement. In a country where more than 65 percent of the population proclaims itself indigenous, Morales is the first indigenous president in Bolivia's 180-year history and the first leader to win more than 50 percent of the popular vote. That hands him a powerful mandate to join the growing number of Latin American nations that appear to be turning away from neoliberal economics to forge a path of their own.

The symbolic value of the election results cannot be overstated, in a country where symbols represent the intensifying passions of people mobilized to end what they see as 500 years of state oppression. Thus the *wiphala*—the checkered rainbow flag of indigenous resistance—flew from every Morales campaign vehicle; technocratic economic policy proposals about how the nation should manage its natural-gas industry became symbols of Bolivian "independence" and "self-governance"; and politicians called for the defense of Pachamama as they pressed their home-grown solutions for this cash-poor but resource-rich country and urged the rejection of the North American *capitalistas*.

Massive support for that rejection fueled widespread protests this past summer, when hundreds of thousands of Bolivians filled the streets of El Alto and La Paz, blocking roads, burning tires and throwing dynamite until then-President Carlos Mesa finally resigned—making him the second president forced out of office in as many years. (President Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada was forced to flee in October 2003 after his army killed more than sixty protesters; he's now living comfortably just outside Washington, DC.) So for the popular former leader of the coca growers' union to have won the presidency by an overwhelming and closely

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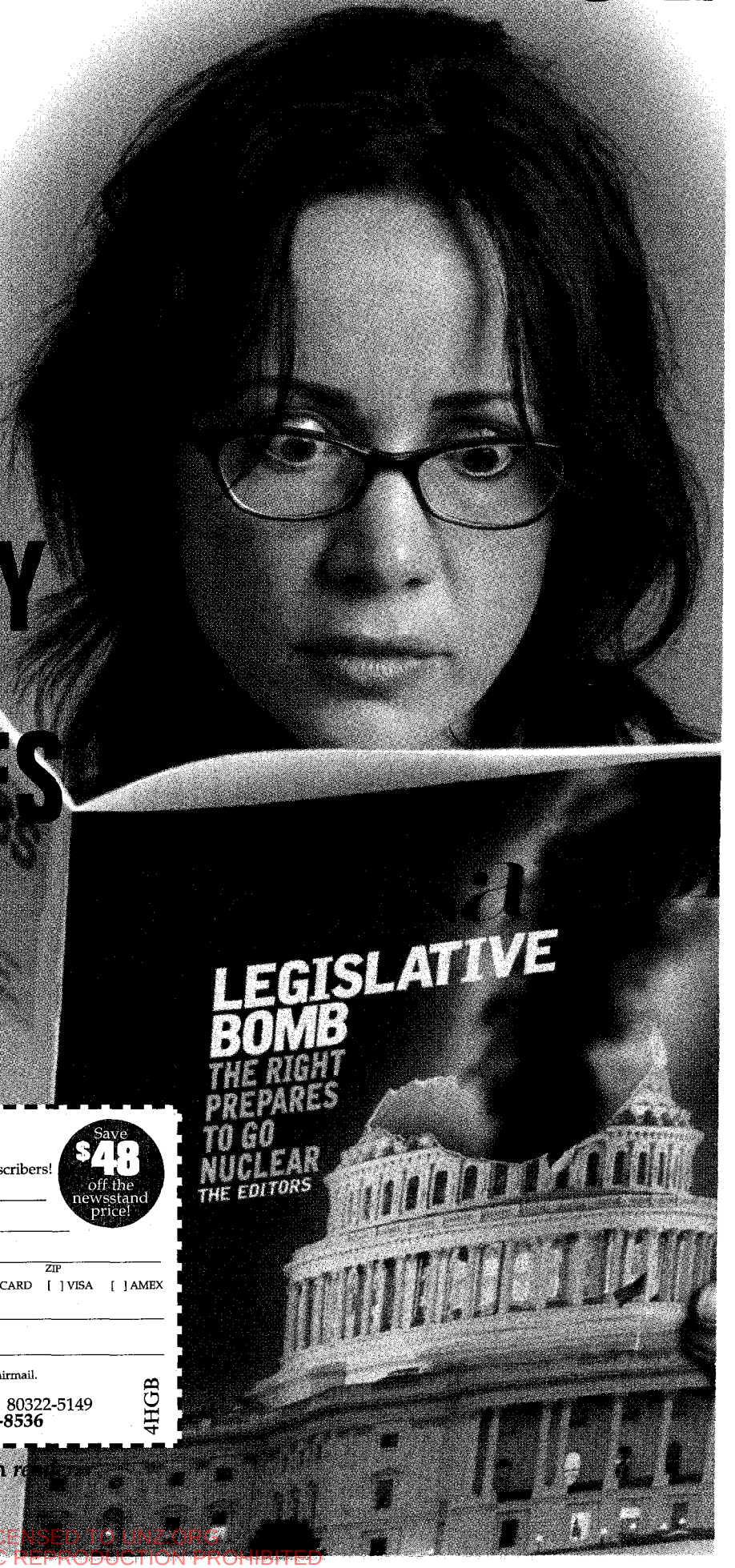

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monitored vote suggests the vitality of Bolivian democracy and the evolution of a new Latin American consensus.

But the question remains: Will Evo, as Bolivians fondly call him, be able to live up to his promises? The political, economic and legal pressure on developing countries to satisfy the interests of multinational investors—as well as opposition from the Bolivian Congress—could well undermine the real value of this historic democratic victory.

Evo's campaign slogans pledged nationalization of oil and gas reserves, "recuperation" of natural resources for Bolivians and a renewed respect for campesinos and workers. Those sorts of promises went over well in the small farming pueblos, where women in their colorful eighteenth-century-style peasant skirts and shawls danced in the streets and waved their broad-brimmed straw hats as Morales rode by in his campaign caravan, the villagers eagerly reaching for the fliers he left in his path. After all, Evo's supporters—poor indigenous farmers and laborers who make up the 40 percent of a country the World Bank labels "extremely poor"—have little other faith left to hold on to.

Years of Washington Consensus–style economic policies, first adopted in the mid-1980s under the label "shock therapy" and expanded in the mid-1990s when the country privatized its oil, gas, electric and other major industries, have done little to help Bolivia's people, more than 65 percent of whom are still stuck below the poverty line. In fact, despite the country's being the testing ground for much of this policy over the past twenty years, the average Bolivian is now poorer than his grandparents were fifty years ago. The privatization schemes, rather than bringing prosperity as promised, have left Bolivia the most impoverished nation in South America. They've also provoked a wave of anger against international financial institutions and the United States, a sentiment that was on display all over Bolivia in this presidential election.

NOAH FRIEDMAN-RUDOVSKY

Quechua women rush to greet Evo Morales in the isolated town of Belem

The US government, for its part, has expressed deep fears about a Morales presidency, claiming that he is a protégé of Hugo Chávez and Fidel Castro—as revolutionary, and as unpredictable. But in many ways it's the United States that has put Morales in the position he's in today. In Bolivia the United States is not only a symbol of foreign capital but of the bitter "war on drugs," which strong-armed Bolivia into accepting a US-financed coca eradication campaign that even the World Bank has admitted bears some responsibility for Bolivia's current poverty. Like everything else in Bolivia, the coca leaf is a symbol: of a locally grown crop, of sacred rituals, of a way of life that allowed Bolivia's peasants, by chewing on the bitter leaves that give energy and stave off hunger, to endure the harsh conditions in the silver and tin mines where they worked as slaves to the Spanish for some 300 years and where many still labor under perilous conditions today. As indigenous culture increasingly becomes a point of pride rather than a mark of shame in Bolivia and across South America, the symbolism of the coca leaf has gained even more importance—and the US war against it has stoked Morales's popularity.

But the most potent symbol in this election for most Bolivians was natural gas, an ever more coveted resource as the international price of oil skyrockets. And the foreign oil companies that extract it—the *transnacionales*, as they call them here, almost spitting the word—represent to many just the latest form of foreign exploitation of Bolivia and its people. Thus every candidate in this election had to promise to "nationalize" the natural gas industry—a word that suggests expropriation of private company property and sets off alarm bells with foreign investors, but which actually means a range of different things in this ideologically charged political culture.

For the right-wing candidate Jorge Quiroga, it meant respecting existing oil and gas contracts but "nationalizing the benefits"—in other words, spending more to pacify the population. But for Morales it has meant forcing a conversion of existing gas contracts into ones in which the state gets 50 percent of the profits and retains control over how, to whom and at what price Bolivian gas is sold. Although that's not what's usually meant by expropriation, his plan still has foreign energy companies panicking. That's because under their current contracts and the 1996 hydrocarbons law that privatized the industry, private companies have had virtually complete control over the production, sale and pricing of oil and gas, and have paid only 18 percent royalties and no taxes—a deal that even government and industry insiders who helped write the law and negotiate the contracts now privately admit is a bad deal for Bolivia.

Still, when the last government, under Carlos Mesa, tried to change the law to increase government revenues, almost every major oil company—including Spain's Repsol, the French company Total, British Gas, ExxonMobil and Oklahoma-based Vintage Petroleum—threatened to bring a claim against Bolivia in international arbitration. Although so far they've agreed to

Daphne Eviatar is a 2005 Alicia Patterson Foundation fellow. Research support was provided by the Investigative Fund of The Nation Institute.

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hold off to see what the new government does, if Morales nationalizes the industry, under the terms of the bilateral investment treaties between Bolivia and the companies' home countries, those companies could sue—in private, closed-door arbitration, without the safeguards normally provided by publicly appointed judges in an international court—not only for the approximately $3.5 billion private companies have already invested in the natural gas industry here but also for the loss of expected profits, which could total tens of billions of dollars. For a country like Bolivia, whose annual revenues are only a little more than $2 billion, that's no small threat. "These processes could bring about requirements of indemnity against the Bolivian state that it cannot pay," says Carlos Romero, executive director of Centro de Estudios Jurídicos e Investigación Social (CEJIS), a prominent human rights organization based in Santa Cruz. It's for that reason—and a host of other ways the United States, the World Bank, the IMF and the Inter-American Development Bank can threaten to tighten the noose around Bolivia's highly indebted neck—that an Evo Morales presidency may well remain largely a symbolic victory.

The political, economic and legal pressure on Bolivia to satisfy multinational investors could undermine this historic democratic victory.

Nor can Morales do much to address the plight of coca farmers. Although he has said he'll campaign to decriminalize the coca leaf on an international level, he knows that's a long shot—and that he can do little to change the system at home. Indeed, he admitted as much in a recent interview. Seated at his campaign headquarters before a plate overflowing with coca leaves, he told me that "zero coca means zero *cocaleros*." His affable manner had turned grave. Evo does not disguise his disdain for the old US-imposed policy of "zero coca." But that policy, as he well knows, was already abandoned last year under Carlos Mesa's government, with eventual US acquiescence. Since 2004, farmers in certain regions have been permitted to grow small amounts of coca for local traditional use.

Most *cocaleros* don't consider that nearly enough to earn a living, but Morales knows that to completely decriminalize the coca leaf domestically—something he has never said he will do—would be a dramatic rejection of US policy that would likely lead not only to a loss of US aid but would require the United States, under US law, to vote against any Bolivian application for loans or grants from the World Bank, IMF or Inter-American Development Bank, all critical to Bolivia's ability to finance its debt and fuel its economy. (Even more than the money itself, the credibility these institutions offer the country in the international financial markets is immeasurable.) In effect, any attempt by the new president to do exactly what Bolivians just elected him to do would marshal the forces of the international financial community against the government and doom the country's already precarious financial stability.

"It's OK, there are plenty of other countries, like China, that will be willing to help us," Morales told me on a rare break from campaigning shortly before the election. Countries like China and Venezuela may be exactly where he turns, and their loans and investment would surely help. But despite having repeatedly described himself during the campaign as "Washington's nightmare"—a phrase quoted repeatedly in the US press—Morales is not likely to buck the broader and wealthier US and European business community, and may well stick with a modestly reformed version of the status quo. That won't satisfy the more radical Aymara Indian activists, who are intent on breathing life into the symbols of the increasingly powerful indigenous movement.

"The identity of people and of communities has become a very important issue in the country," Pablo Mamani, a sociologist who teaches at the public universities in El Alto and La Paz, told me shortly before the election. "The Aymara will all vote for Evo, because we want to see an Aymara in the presidency. But if he is not really allowed to govern, the militant social organizations can create a scenario of very severe conflict between the people and the state."

The nation's right-wing movements, particularly those concentrated in Santa Cruz, Bolivia's wealthiest department, where the energy and agricultural export businesses are based, may well encourage that. In the past year they've been waging a fierce campaign for autonomy—essentially, a separate local government that would shrink the central government's power over the region and its ability to extract taxes. With Morales's victory—which nonetheless failed to win his party control of the Congress—that battle will surely intensify.

"Bolivia is facing a big problem," Carlos Rojas, the burly president of a leading association of agricultural producers, told me from his spacious Santa Cruz office. "We don't accept Mr. Morales's policy about land," he said, referring to Morales's support for redistribution of large idle estates, most of which are concentrated in Santa Cruz. "We will have a conflict with him.... The only way for the country to move up and get out of poverty is by working, every day and all the time. If the social movements go and block the roads, we cannot work. We believe it's important to give Mr. Morales the opportunity to work for this country. But if he's not effective, he's going to be out—probably before the end of his term."

Some Bolivians are already planning on that. "We believe MAS [Movement Toward Socialism, Morales's party] won't change anything," said Abraham Delgado Mancilla, a soft-spoken and serious 28-year-old Aymara law student who helped organize the massive protests that ultimately brought down the last two Bolivian presidents. We were walking through the packed streets of El Alto—a burgeoning, impoverished city of homemade brick buildings in the Andean peaks rising above La Paz—where Mancilla lives and continues to organize students and neighbors. "The state doesn't serve us with this system. So we must move forward. What happens in Bolivia is twenty years of reforms, and nothing changes," he said. "We're still poor. The only road to solving poverty is by nationalization and radical redistribution of land," he added, his tone rising as he grew more agitated. "Evo will not be able to do what he says. His programs will change nothing. We're waiting for him to fail. And if he does, the people will come out with even more force," he said.

I asked him what that would mean. "I think what's going to happen is there will be a civil war." ■

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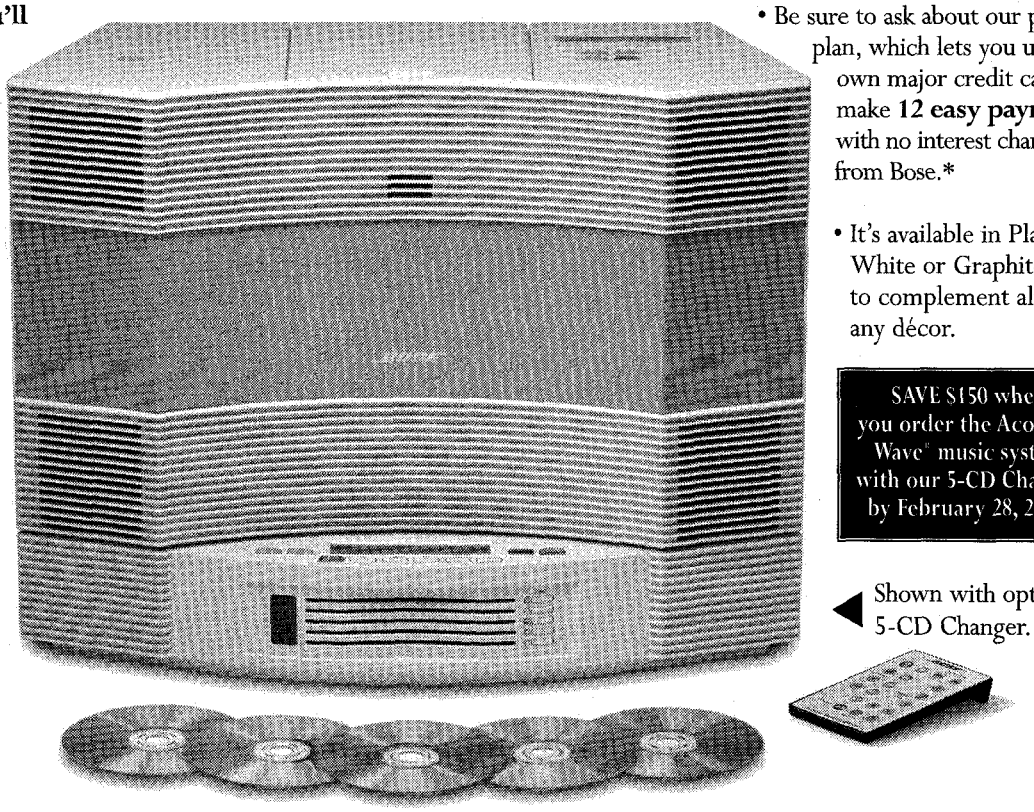

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THE POINT IS NOT TO IMPLEMENT THEM NOW BUT TO CHANGE THE TERMS OF THE DEBATE.

A 'Top Ten' List of Bold Ideas

GAR ALPEROVITZ AND THAD WILLIAMSON

The polls suggest we are nearing the end of the Bush era. But conservative scandal and failure won't lead to a serious progressive resurgence as long as Democrats remain stuck in short-term tactical thinking. Republicans and the tame-dog media tell us, ad nauseam, that Democrats have no new ideas. Enough! Tough, bold, important ideas are plentiful—and it's time to start talking about them, to stake out serious positions and to demand action. No, they can't all be achieved right away. But the sooner progressives start saying what we really want, the sooner the debate will be about our issues, not theirs.

JANNA BROWER

Here's a "top ten" list to get the ball rolling—and to plant the flag for positive, aggressive post-Bush (and post–New Democrat) near- and long-term change:

1. Real National Security. The United States is protected by two oceanic moats; the only truly serious security threat we face is the possibility that terrorists will acquire nuclear weapons. We should shift half of the roughly $500 billion we now spend on a cold war–style defense posture and counterproductive interventionism to a fully funded antiproliferation strategy, to homeland protection and to the elimination of energy dependence on the Middle East. The first priority should be an all-out effort to reduce nuclear arms and nuclear materials. And we should begin a massive campaign to reduce proliferation pressures in Iran and North Korea, including the use of economic incentives, and work to ease the Pakistan-India nuclear rivalry.

2. Single-Payer Universal Healthcare. More than 45 million Americans have no health insurance, yet we devote an incredible 15 percent of our GDP to a wasteful system that enriches insurance companies. Meanwhile, health costs are forcing major corporations like GM into bankruptcy. We should demand the obvious: Only a government-organized single-payer system can challenge pharmaceutical profiteering and eliminate the huge administrative costs of insurance companies, which compete to limit treatment of seriously ill patients and nickel-and-dime others. A 2005 Lewin Group study estimates that such a system could save $344 billion over the next decade in California alone.

3. Real Social Security. This is the wealthiest nation in the world. A serious progressive strategy should go far beyond the current debate by demanding a bountiful future for Americans when they retire. A good place to start is with a proposal put forward by former Bush Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill that would produce the equivalent of a million-dollar annuity for every citizen—enough to guarantee $50,000 or more a year for everyone in retirement.

4. Universal Daycare. France provides free daycare for all children 3 years old and above, with subsidized care for younger children. Belgium provides free care for those over 2 and a half (subsidized for younger). Finland provides free care for all low-income children, subsidized care for others. It's time to demand the same. This June voters in California will consider a proposal that would tax the top 1 percent of income earners (individuals making more than $400,000 and couples making more than $800,000) to provide quality preschool for all 4-year-olds.

5. A Rebuilt Educational System. Let's start at the top: Many nations provide tuition-free college education to all students; we should too (one cost estimate: $60 billion). And if we really want to leave no child behind, we'll have to reduce K–12 class size, reward the best teachers and make the teaching profession attractive to our most talented young people (a serious start could be made for $130 billion). Finally, we should upgrade preschool programs like Head Start, which nurture critical skills and emotional development ($22 billion would cover most eligible children).

6. A Thirty-Hour Week. The American workweek declined from roughly seventy hours in 1850 to sixty hours in 1900 to fifty hours in 1920, but it has been stuck at a little over forty hours since the middle of the twentieth century. Between 1979 and 2000 France and Germany reduced annual work time by about 240 hours, the equivalent of cutting six forty-hour weeks out of the year. Over the next three decades we should steadily reduce work time, using a radically expanded earned-income tax credit to help finance work reduction for those who cannot otherwise afford to cut back their hours and to reduce harm to small businesses.

7. A Fair Tax System. Can we afford such programs in an era of massive budget deficits? The fact is, the top 1 percent of income earners take home more than the bottom 100 million, and the top 1 percent of wealth holders own just under half of all investment capital. We should restore top marginal tax rates to the Nixon-era level of 70 percent, revive taxes on estates worth more than $3.5 million and institute the wealth taxes that are common in Europe. We should also return to Eisenhower-era corporate tax policies (when corporations accounted for roughly 25 percent of federal revenues, compared with today's roughly 10 percent). Corporate and wealth-tax changes alone could produce up to $800 billion a year. New Jersey and California have recently shown that taxes on those making, respectively, more than $500,000 and $1 million are politically realistic and popular.

8. Worker-Owned (and Community-Owned) Means of Production. This used to be radical rhetoric, but the fact is that 8.8 mil-

Gar Alperovitz, Lionel R. Bauman Professor of Political Economy at the University of Maryland, is a founding principal of the Democracy Collaborative. Thad Williamson, an assistant professor of leadership studies at the University of Richmond, is a fellow at the Democracy Collaborative.

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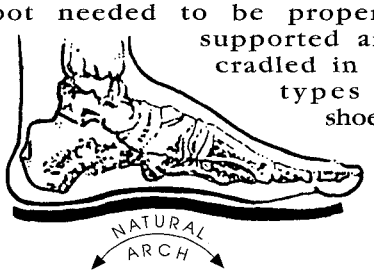

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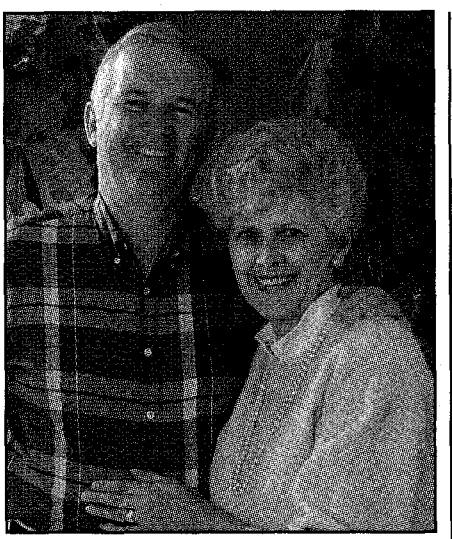

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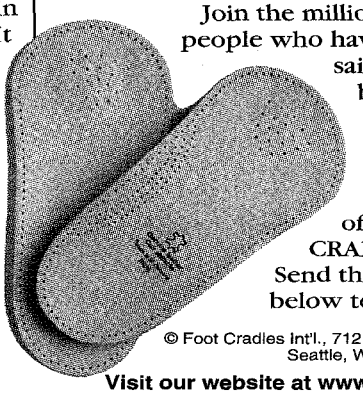

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lion workers are already involved in 11,000 companies that are wholly or substantially owned by the employees. There are 4,000–6,000 neighborhood-benefiting corporations at work building housing and creating jobs in cities across the nation. Democratic and Republican mayors now regularly set up municipally owned companies to make money for their communities (and often to solve environmental problems). Cities and states also invest in job-creating efforts, often using public pension assets. A full-scale, long-term program would step up what is already going on at the state and local level—and then move such policies into high gear as a nationwide program to create what might be called a "New American Commonwealth."

9. Planned New Communities. The US population is expected to grow to at least 400 million by midcentury and, if Census Bureau high projections are realized, more than 1 billion by the end of the century. Is today's suburban sprawl—already unmanageable—simply going to continue unchecked? Part of the answer is to rebuild the economies of central cities and older suburbs. Beyond this, a rational post-sprawl population-dispersion strategy, based on successful European precedents, would use federal loans, loan guarantees, tax incentives and public procurement to develop ecologically sustainable, mass-transit-friendly new communities in rural and small-town locations. The key is intelligent planning as opposed to out-of-control private development.

10. A Twenty-First-Century Regional America. The United States is very large compared with most other advanced industrial nations: Germany, for instance, can be tucked inside the borders of Montana alone; France is smaller than Texas. Numerous thinkers—from historian Frederick Jackson Turner to the late George Kennan—have suggested regional change as a desirable long-term goal. One plausible scenario would begin with California asserting more independent powers of self-determination. Groups of states like New England or the Northwest might demand similar changes. Regional decentralization is fast becoming a fact of life throughout the world. If a future US regionalism is to protect and enhance democracy, self-determination and ecological sustainability without sacrificing federal civil rights protections, progressives will have to take the lead.

It would be easy to add to this list: A public investment strategy is needed to boost the economy into high gear, along with a fair-trade plan to safeguard key industries and jobs. We should transform the minimum wage into a new national "living wage" standard. Investing in conservation and renewable energy (and raising fuel-saving auto and truck CAFE standards) is a practical and moral imperative. So too is making good on the US pledge to help achieve the Millennium Goal of cutting extreme global poverty in half by 2015. Beyond this are new legal safeguards to expand, rather than reduce, civil liberties and civil rights.

The essential point is that progressives must begin demanding what really makes sense now and for the long haul. Even if a bold program cannot be enacted at once, tough demands change the terms of the debate. If Democrats confine themselves to nibbling at the edges of what seems possible in a conservative, GOP-defined system, the result will only be further shabby compromises. As the Bush era fades and New Democrats flounder, we need to ask ourselves what kind of society we really want to live in—and then begin to organize, step by step, around a vision that can once more inspire and re-energize politics. ■

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MICHAEL T. KLARE

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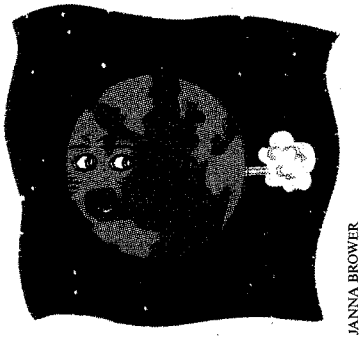

JANNA BROWER

§ Item. As we went to press, Russia was restoring the flow of natural gas to Western and Central Europe after state-controlled Gazprom curtailed deliveries on January 1 in a bid to force Ukraine to pay the market price for gas previously supplied at subsidized rates. Although emphasizing the price issue, Russian officials apparently intended to constrict Ukraine's energy supplies as a way of punishing that country's pro-Western president, Viktor Yushchenko, architect of the Orange Revolution, for his overtures to NATO and the EU. Gazprom's pipelines to Western Europe (which buys a quarter of its gas from Russia) pass through Ukraine so it could siphon off some of the diminished supply, leaving very little for other customers and provoking fears of an energy crisis at the onset of winter.

§ Item. A dispute between China and Japan over the ownership of an undersea gas field in an area of the East China Sea claimed by both countries has grown increasingly inflammatory, with China sending warships into the area and Japan threatening "bold action" if the Chinese begin pumping gas from the field. The conflict has soured relations between Beijing and Tokyo and provoked a strong nationalistic response from the populations of both countries. The huge anti-Japanese demonstrations in Shanghai and other Chinese cities last April were prompted, in part, by Tokyo's announcement that it would permit drilling in the area by Japanese firms. A peaceful resolution of the dispute does not appear imminent.

Michael T. Klare, The Nation*'s defense correspondent, is a professor of peace and world security studies at Hampshire College. He is the author, most recently, of* Blood and Oil *(Owl).*

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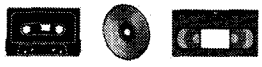

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Ruins of a Roman aqueduct, Aspendos, Turkey (Roman Asia Minor).

About Your Professor

Professor Harl is Professor of History at Tulane University, where he has taught since 1978, after receiving his Ph.D. in History from Yale University. He has led tours and worked on excavations in Turkey for many years. At Tulane, he has received the annual Student Award for Excellence in Teaching *eight times*. In Fall 2001, he was the national winner of the Robert Foster Cherry Award for Great Teachers.

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§ Item. Ever since India announced plans more than a year ago to build a natural gas pipeline from fields in Iran to its own territory via Pakistan, the Bush Administration has been applying pressure on New Delhi to cancel the project, claiming it will undermine US attempts to isolate Tehran and curb its nuclear efforts. "We have communicated to the Indian government our concerns about the gas pipeline cooperation between Iran and India," Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice announced after meeting with Indian Foreign Minister Natwar Singh on March 16. But the Indians have continued talks with Islamabad and Tehran over the pipeline plan.

The United States is becoming increasingly dependent on natural gas. This country now relies on natural gas for approximately one-fourth of its total energy supply, more than from any source except oil. As a result, the economy has become more and more vulnerable to fluctuations in gas supply and pricing—a vulnerability that should be especially evident this winter as gas prices hit record levels, with painful effects on the poor. Natural gas provides approximately 14 percent of the energy used to generate electricity in this country, 45 percent of home heating fuel and 31 percent of the energy and petrochemicals consumed by agriculture and industry. Gas is also used as a feedstock for the manufacture of hydrogen, a promising new entrant in the race to develop alternative fuels.

Russia, with 26.7 percent of the world's proven gas supplies (the US has 2.9 percent), will dominate the energy field for many decades.

The United States currently relies on North American supplies for most of its gas, but with those reserves being depleted at a rapid pace and few untapped fields available for exploitation, need for gas from other regions is growing and energy plants seek more gas from foreign suppliers like Qatar, Nigeria and Russia. As with oil, America could become heavily dependent on foreign suppliers for essential energy needs, a situation fraught with danger for national security. Many of America's key allies, including the NATO powers and Japan, are dependent on imports.

As the global output of petroleum begins to contract in the decades ahead, industrialized nations will increasingly rely on natural gas. According to the Energy Department, the world's known gas reserves stood at 6,076 trillion cubic feet in 2004. In terms of energy output, this is equivalent to approximately 1,094 billion barrels of oil, or approximately 92 percent of known petroleum reserves. But because the world is consuming a smaller proportion each year of the remaining gas supply than it is of the remaining oil supply (1.5 percent as compared with 2.5 percent), gas should remain relatively abundant even after the supply of petroleum begins to contract. Considerable untouched gas is also believed to reside in remote "stranded" fields that could someday be added to the tally of proven reserves, further enhancing the fuel's role in the global energy equation.

Because natural gas is more environmentally friendly than oil or coal (it releases half as much carbon dioxide as coal for equal energy output, and a third less than petroleum), it is attractive to countries seeking to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions in accordance with the Kyoto treaty. In Europe gas's share of all fuels used in generating electricity is projected to rise from 18 percent in 2002 to 29 percent in 2030. A similar trend can be expected in the United States, if Congress or some future administration moves to reduce the nation's emissions of CO_2.

Developing nations like China, India and South Korea, increasingly aware of the environmental consequences of their excessive reliance on oil and coal, are also turning to natural gas. According to the Energy Department, gas consumption in China will grow by an estimated 7 percent per year between 2001 and 2025, five times the rate for the United States and the largest for any major industrial power; India and South Korea are also among the fastest-growing gas consumers. These projections help explain the aggressive steps being taken by these countries to secure additional supplies of gas.

The rising worldwide demand for gas is also influencing relations between the major consuming nations and their principal suppliers. A key factor in the geopolitics of natural gas is the heavy concentration of reserves in a relatively small number of producing countries. All told, the top ten gas producers harbor 76 percent of the world's proven reserves, while the top five—Russia, Iran, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates—hold nearly 67 percent. This means, of course, that these countries are in a very strong position to control the global flow of gas and to influence market forces.

Russia, which owns 26.7 percent of the world's proven gas supplies (compared with 2.9 percent for the United States), will play a dominant role in the energy field for many decades to come. Although the United States and Russia produced similar amounts of gas in 2004–05 (543 billion and 589 billion cubic meters, respectively), America's output was about 10 percent of its total reserves while Russia's output was only 1 percent.

Russia already supplies a large share of Europe's natural gas, and when new pipelines are constructed, it will be capable of supplying vast amounts to China, Korea and Japan—even the United States, eventually. Until now, the Russians have been very careful to avoid giving the impression that they intend to exploit their dominant position in Europe for political advantage. Nevertheless, Moscow has been accused of engaging in such practices in the past: In December 2000, for example, it temporarily suspended gas deliveries to Georgia in a move perceived by many Georgians as punishment for the failure of its leaders, notably then-President Eduard Shevardnadze, to defer to Russia on key regional issues. The current blockage of gas to Ukraine can be seen as another instance of the same tactic.

Officials of the European Union are worried about the growing role of Gazprom in the delivery of natural gas to Europe. At present, Gazprom supplies approximately 40 percent of Europe's natural gas, and its share is likely to grow as gas fields in the North Sea are exhausted. Fearing that Moscow may someday exploit its role as Europe's major gas supplier to wring political concessions from its customers, EU officials have called for greater diversity in the procurement of energy—so far, to little avail.

Iran is also a major producer of natural gas. Under increasing diplomatic pressure from the Bush Administration to halt its suspected pursuit of nuclear weapons, Tehran has been eager to establish joint production and export projects with friendly nations in Europe and Asia. In the past two years alone, it has signed several multibillion-dollar deals with companies from

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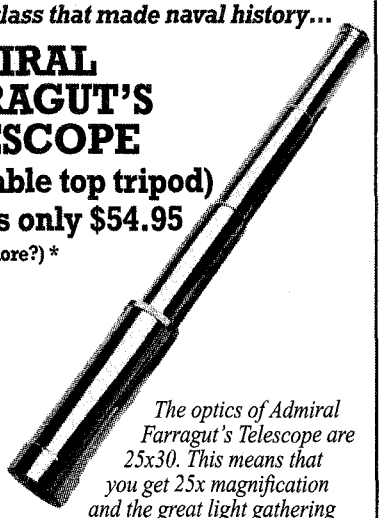

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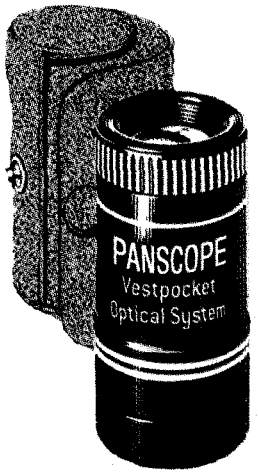

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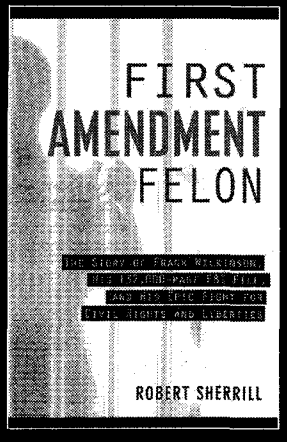

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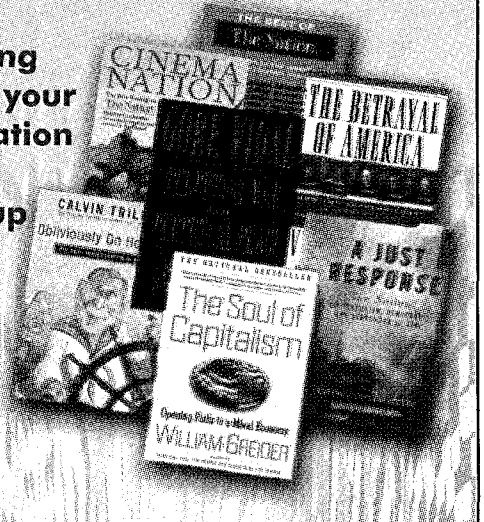

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GREAT GIFTS

France, Italy, Norway, Turkey, Japan and India for joint development of offshore gas fields in the Persian Gulf and the construction of new pipelines to Europe and Asia. Capping this drive was the signing in October 2004 of a $100 billion, twenty-five-year contract with the China National Petrochemical Corporation (Sinopec) for the joint production and export of liquefied natural gas (LNG), much of which will ultimately go to China. While all this makes perfect commercial sense, given Iran's need for foreign partners in the management of these ambitious projects, it is safe to assume Tehran is also seeking to increase the number of allies it can turn to in case of a showdown with the United States.

Qatar has tacked the opposite way, using its huge gas reserves to establish close ties with Washington and to insinuate itself beneath the US defense umbrella. Under a $10 billion, twenty-five-year agreement signed in 2003, ExxonMobil will build the world's largest LNG shipping facility in Qatar. Much of the resulting liquid will go to the United States to be converted back into gas. This will entail the construction of new LNG terminals at ports on the US Gulf Coast, a major undertaking.

Like Qatar's, many of the world's largest deposits of natural gas are located far from the areas where demand is greatest. The most efficient and economical way to transport gas to distant markets is by pipeline. As a result, vast natural gas pipeline networks have been built in North America, Europe and the former Soviet Union, and many more such conduits are under construction. These networks are easiest to construct on land or in relatively shallow, enclosed bodies of water like the Mediterranean and the Black Sea, both of which are now traversed by gas pipelines.

At present, however, it is impractical to build gas pipelines beneath a large ocean like the Atlantic or Pacific, so gas traveling from the Middle East or Africa to the United States or Japan must go by ship. Unlike crude petroleum, which can be pumped directly from the ground onto waiting ships, gas must first be converted to a liquid by cooling it to extremely low temperatures (around –160° centigrade, or –260° Fahrenheit), transported on mammoth refrigerated vessels and then converted back to a gas by raising its temperature, at giant regassification plants in the receiving country. This is very expensive and energy draining, making seaborne transport a far less attractive proposition than pipeline delivery. Still, in their hunger for ever-increasing supplies of energy, more and more countries are building LNG terminals in their harbors and negotiating with major gas suppliers like Iran, Qatar and Nigeria for long-term contracts.

Whether natural gas is transported by pipeline or ship, the growing commerce in it is likely to nurture new forms of international cooperation, like that between longtime rivals India and Pakistan, both desperate to boost their energy supplies in order to sustain strong economic growth. In June energy ministers from the two countries set up a joint working group to plan construction of a $4 billion, 1,700-mile gas pipeline from Iran, and ground breaking is projected for sometime later this year—unless, of course, the Bush Administration succeeds in arm-twisting one or the other into canceling the plan.

India is also looking eastward for additional supplies of natural gas. In January its officials met with their counterparts from Burma and Bangladesh to discuss the construction of a gas

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pipeline from Burma to India via Bangladesh. Such an arrangement would frustrate US efforts to isolate Burma for its egregious human rights behavior.

Increased cooperation in the transport of natural gas is developing too among Russia, China, Japan and the two Koreas. At the center of these efforts are the vast reservoirs of natural gas lying off Sakhalin Island in Russia's far east. To move this gas to international markets giant energy firms, including ExxonMobil and Royal Dutch/Shell, will build a huge LNG facility on Sakhalin's southern tip and at least one major pipeline. One pipeline is expected to extend from Sakhalin to northern China, while another might go to Japan; some visionaries have also proposed a branch line extending to South Korea via North Korea (a project that, if undertaken, would go a long way toward cementing the increasingly warm relations between the two). The LNG, meanwhile, will travel by ship to terminals in Japan and possibly the United States, if new LNG regassification plants are constructed along America's Pacific coast and/or in Baja California.

If the United States is to boost its imports of natural gas significantly, it will need many more LNG terminals in US harbors (there are only four now operating), and this prospect has already aroused considerable opposition from local authorities and environmentalists, who worry about the risk of explosions and other calamities. In a move little noticed by the American press or the public, Congress voted in July (as part of the new energy bill) to give the government the power to override local governments in the placement of future LNG terminals, a step that could lead to the construction of many more such facilities on the Atlantic and Pacific coasts and a sharp growth in US reliance on imported gas.

Although demand for natural gas has engendered cooperation between once-estranged nations, rival claims to oil and gas fields have frequently caused friction, even armed conflict. This has most often occurred in cases involving disputed offshore territories, notably in portions of the South China Sea, the East China Sea and the Strait of Korea. All these areas are believed to harbor substantial reserves of hydrocarbons in one form or another—oil and gas combined, gas alone or, as in the Korea Strait, gas hydrates (a crystal-like substance made up of methane and ice that can be converted into natural gas)—and all have been the site of violent or threatening confrontations between forces of the rival claimants involved. In each case, moreover, the United States is allied with one or more of the contending parties.

The most intense and prolonged of these conflicts has occurred in the South China Sea, a relatively shallow body of water believed to harbor substantial reserves of oil and gas. All of the countries with shorelines on the South China Sea—Brunei, China, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Vietnam—have laid claim to a 200-mile offshore Exclusive Economic Zone in the area, many of them overlapping with one another, and all have laid claims to some or all of the small islands and reefs that dot the region. China, the dominant power in the area, claims *all* the islands and has been particularly aggressive in asserting its sovereignty over them—on several occasions using military force to drive away ships belonging to Vietnam and the Philippines. Several attempts have been made by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations to resolve the dispute peacefully, but China has not renounced its claim to the islands and continues to expand its small garrisons on some of the larger islets.

Japan is a party to two maritime boundary disputes in the region—the one with China discussed earlier and another with South Korea over a cluster of small islands in the Strait of Korea located roughly midway between the two nations. Here, too, the conflict revolves around the boundary between two overlapping Exclusive Economic Zones and the ownership of energy supplies that are thought to lie in the disputed territory—in this case, gas hydrates that could be mined and converted into natural gas. Efforts to resolve the conflict peacefully have so far come to naught, and warships and planes from both sides patrol the disputed area and occasionally approach each other in a threatening manner, risking an armed confrontation.

Whether the benefits of cooperation in procuring natural gas will come to be seen as more appealing than the rewards from unilateral action remains to be seen. One thing is certain: The world's growing demand for natural gas will play an ever more significant role in shaping the relations between major supplying and consuming nations. The need for energy will increasingly set the agenda of the major powers, and natural gas—long in the shadow of petroleum—is about to claim center stage. ■

LETTERS
CONTINUED

(Continued From Page 2)

hallucinatory as her suggestion that "American hip-hop" was a factor in the ghetto youths' rebellion (France has had its own highly sophisticated and popular rappers for nearly two decades, and—as the daily *Libération* recalled recently in an article on them—had policy-makers listened more than a decade ago to the predictions and cries of distress in their lyrics, they would have seen the rebellion coming). I have reported from those *cités*, and bloody few of them have the manicured amenities Pfaff imagines. Finally, her assertion that the rebellion was due "mostly" to the economy ignores the degree to which people of color are almost entirely *excluded* from the French economy. It's called racism, Dominique, and is recognized by most serious French commentators as the primary cause of the rebellion.

By the way, it's worth noting that since my article appeared, an official report by the Renseignements Généraux (France's domestic intelligence police) declared there was not a shred of evidence that the vandalizing ghetto rebellions were organized or even aided by either Islamic fundamentalists or organized criminal gangs, as Interior Minister Nicolas Sarkozy (and some American conservatives) had suggested. No, they were a spontaneous combustion, and their principal kerosene was the poisonous and soul-destroying racial discrimination and exclusion that pervades French society from top to bottom.

DOUG IRELAND

GBS & RFK

Montreal

■ The quotation Ann Maguire thinks she has borrowed from Robert Kennedy ["Letters," Dec. 26]—"Some men see things as they are and ask why. I dream things that never were and ask why not"—actually originated with sometime *Nation* contributor George Bernard Shaw. In Act I of *Back to Methuselah*, the Serpent says, "You see things; and you say 'Why?' But I dream things that never were; and I say 'Why not?'"

ALAN ANDREWS

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COMMENT

(Continued From Page 7)

was able to see and understand the economy in a fresh manner. He not only fought for a just and humane world; he embodied his politics in the manner he conducted his life."

On the *Monthly Review* website (www.monthlyreview.org) there is a story: A student asked Harry how he could go on hoping for socialism in America when it never came. "I don't expect anything particular," he said. "But this is the way I am. I have to believe there can be a better world."

Jack Gordon

Jack Gordon, known as "the unabashedly liberal conscience of Florida's State Senate," was a unique combination of scholar, wit and idealist as well as a remarkably effective practical politician. His stands should have made him anathema to the Florida legislature of the 1970s and '80s, still dominated by good ol' boys: Gordon opposed the death penalty, favored the Equal Rights Amendment and legalizing marijuana, and was a longtime champion of civil rights and school integration.

Instead, Gordon was chosen majority leader by his colleagues, who respected his fairness, his civility and his legislative wiliness. That he also happened to be a successful banker gave him street cred with conservatives. Gordon was rather fond of many of the more colorful specimens of good ol' boy with whom he served, and he was skillful at finding common ground with them. He was a natural teacher and believed part of his job was to use debate to elucidate issues, to encourage problem-solving. As a result, his rich legacy includes one of the most advanced amendments on privacy rights in any state Constitution as well as Florida's homestead property-tax exemption. He outlawed discrimination at country clubs and championed education. "The Gordon Rule," which requires more math and writing courses, raises the skill level of Florida college students. He was the kind of legislator who devoted time to thankless tasks like reorganizing the Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services and creating the Department of Corrections, grunt work that makes an enormous difference in the lives of people with no power.

Gordon's politics were always progressive, and he fondly recalled the furious debates at the Miami Beach chess club, where old Bolsheviks and old Mensheviks still went after one another. He was a friend and business partner of the great Florida populist Claude Pepper; after Pepper's death Gordon briefly considered a run for his Congressional seat. Although he was a brilliant politician, he was constitutionally incapable of dishonesty. The campaign consultants decided he would make a terrible candidate.

Gordon retired from the State Senate in 1992, observing that the money in politics had become overwhelming. He founded the Hospice Foundation of America and served on Rosalyn Carter's mental health task force. He was a remarkable public servant and also just a lovely man. He is remembered by those who knew him as the most brilliant or the kindest man they ever met. Few things were more fun than seeing Jack Gordon's ascetic face light up and his eyes begin to twinkle as he recognized something funny in whatever was under discussion—then all you had to do was sit back and wait for the quiet wisecrack. MOLLY IVINS

Molly Ivins, a Nation *contributing editor, is a nationally syndicated political columnist.*

In Fact . . .

SMOKING OUT FLAME

■ The inside back cover ad by a group called FLAME, which appeared in our January 9/16 issue, sparked a flurry of "How could you!" (or worse) e-mails from our readers. The ad, which purports to expose propaganda circulated by Palestinians (the most blatant of which, according to the ad, is that these nonexistent Palestinians have a legitimate claim to the land that eternally belongs to Israel), is, we believe, historically inaccurate and arguably mendacious. From our point of view, it purveys one of the most destructive myths of Israel's right wing, namely, that Palestinians have no legitimate national rights. This myth has long been a drag on efforts for a peaceful solution to the conflict. So how, you might ask, can we run such an ad? We run it because *The Nation*'s ad policy starts with the presumption that "we will accept advertising even if the views expressed are repugnant to those of the editors." (And let's be clear: The editors find the views of FLAME quite repugnant.) We do impose limits on commercial ads, barring, for example, those that are false, lurid or patently fraudulent, illegal or libelous. However, ads that present a political point of view are considered to fall under our editorial commitment to freedom of speech and, perforce, we grant them the same latitude we claim for our own views. But we do reserve the right to denounce the content of such ads, just as our editorials denounce ideas we abhor. And that is what we do here.

RADIONATION MOVES TO AIR AMERICA RADIO

■ We're pleased to announce that the new *RadioNation* show, hosted by author, activist and award-winning radio personality Laura Flanders, will debut on Air America Radio Network on Saturday, January 7. Broadcast for three hours each Saturday and Sunday, and available online, it will feature news and programming from around the country; special remote broadcasts; interviews with *Nation* writers, editors and Nation Institute journalism fellows; reader call-ins; a weekly journalists' round table; coverage of *Nation* events; musicians performing live; and cutting-edge political and cultural commentary. A one-hour version will be provided free to noncommercial community and college stations. For information, check out www.radionation.org.

THIS WEEK ON THE WEB

■ For more on the metastasizing Abramoff scandal, see Katrina vanden Heuvel and John Nichols at www.thenation.com.

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BOOKS & THE ARTS

La Vie de Bohème

JOHN PALATTELLA

THE COLLECTED POEMS OF TED BERRIGAN.
Edited by Alice Notley, with
Anselm Berrigan and Edmund Berrigan.
California. 749 pp. $49.95.

Several years after Ted Berrigan's death, in 1983, the poet Ron Padgett spent some time reading his friend's papers at Columbia University. It was an unsettling experience, not least because Berrigan was only 48 years old when he died. The two men had met in 1959. Berrigan was working on a master's degree about George Bernard Shaw at the University of Tulsa; he was also a poet, and he came to know Padgett through a little magazine edited by Padgett and sold in a local bookstore. Berrigan grew to detest Tulsa's literary scene, which he found uptight and elitist, and in 1960, along with Padgett and a few other young Tulsa writers, he moved to Manhattan. Berrigan lived downtown and eked out an existence by reselling stolen books, sponging off friends and working the occasional odd job. Padgett was a student at Columbia and lived uptown. Berrigan often spent weekends with him there, and before long he was earning a little money by ghostwriting papers for Columbia undergraduates. Twenty years later Padgett couldn't help but find it bizarre that many of the ghostwriter's own papers—letters, journals, notes and drafts of poems from those early years in New York City—had ended up at Columbia as well, enshrined in its library's special collections.

The story of Berrigan's short career as a poet is a remarkable one, but it's a story too often told by focusing on the extravagant circumstances of the poet's life. Berrigan fancied being a *poète maudit*, fashioning himself as an outcast whose derangement and self-abasement were a protest against the timidity and complacency of bourgeois life. "This year, in this season, I am 'sick' because among other things I scorn their new God of analysis," Berrigan told his first wife, Sandy Alpers Berrigan, in a letter in 1962. If you read about Berrigan, you're bound to learn about his reckless treatment of his body and his ghastly diet (he subsisted mostly on Pepsi, greasy hamburgers and peanut butter sandwiches), or about how he forged prescriptions to buy the many milligrams of speed that fueled his marathon sessions of writing, reading, talking and pontificating. Such snapshots of Berrigan's personal life are meaningful, but they provide little guidance for anyone trying to grasp how the words Berrigan wrote continue to live beyond the life he led, an undertaking made more difficult as only a relatively small amount of Berrigan's poetry has remained in print since his death.

The Collected Poems of Ted Berrigan changes all that. Packed with hundreds of poems long out of print as well as dozens more previously unpublished in books or magazines, *The Collected Poems* is not simply a book but a portable archive, one that creates a little space between the poet's career and stories about his life. The volume makes it impossible not to notice that there was always more to Berrigan than the *poète maudit* of the Lower East Side. Padgett once characterized his friend as a "combat boot among ballet slippers," a remark meant to convey how Berrigan, a working-class kid from Providence, Rhode Island, who had been in the Army and went to college in Tulsa on the GI Bill, felt cowed during his early years in Manhattan whenever he found himself among urbane poets like Frank O'Hara, Kenneth Koch and John Ashbery, all of whom had graduated from Harvard. *The Collected Poems* shows that Berrigan was equally adept at wearing both shoes, balancing cockiness and composure, grit and grace. In the

Ted Berrigan was the poète maudit *of the Lower East Side, a self-styled outcast who made art out of his life on the margins.*

John Palattella writes regularly about poetry for The Nation.

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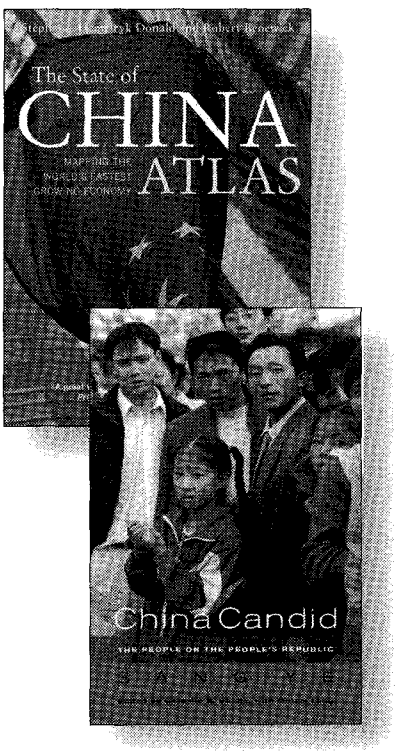
Focus on China



China Candid

The People on the People's Republic

SANG YE

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second poem of *The Sonnets*, Berrigan writes, "dear Berrigan. He died/Back to books. I read." With *The Collected Poems* providing an unprecedented opportunity to plunge into Berrigan's work, those lines have never seemed more apt.

Written in a three-month burst, *The Sonnets* (1963) was Berrigan's first book, one bristling with defiance. Berrigan had dared to use a form that the grandees of American Modernism had condemned. William Carlos Williams, for example, thought that writing a sonnet in modern America was like "putting a crab into a square box. You've got to cut his legs off to make him fit." Berrigan's defiance, however, involved more than simply embracing a form that Williams had deemed archaic to the American tongue. Berrigan's sonnets ring serious changes on the traditional sonnet structure of an octave followed by a sestet. Influenced by Tristan Tzara's cut-ups, John Cage's chance compositions and the jarring polyphony of John Ashbery's second book, *The Tennis Court Oath*, Berrigan assembled his fourteen-liners according to various methods. Lines quarried from the compost heap of Berrigan's unpublished poems are worked into a sonnet according to strict formulas. Lines, phrases and shards of lines from sonnets early in the series reappear later in different permutations. Berrigan's own words are collaged with language snatched from the work of other poets. Consequently, a Berrigan sonnet can contain abrupt tonal shifts, disjointed syntax and startling enjambments, and the couplet, if there is one, can appear at the poem's end (its traditional spot) or in its middle. If Williams considered the sonnet a Procrustean box, Berrigan turned it into a Rubik's Cube.

Berrigan didn't gravitate to the sonnet simply to defy his elders, however. *The Sonnets* is also a work of consolidation. The motifs of Berrigan's unpublished early poems—friendship, love, devotion, an acute longing for transformation—are the same ones that Petrarch, writing in the fourteenth century, had designed the sonnet to address. Whereas the stiff, baroque style of Berrigan's early poems often muffled these motifs, the sonnet presented him with a way to frame and sharpen them. From Sonnet IV:

> Lord, it is time. Summer was very great
> All sweetly spoke to her of me
> about your feet, so delicate, and yet
> double E!!

Moreover, Berrigan's enthusiasm for *The Tennis Court Oath* wasn't limited to its disjunctive style. As with Ashbery's book, thwarted expectations and a sense of vulnerability and waywardness fill Berrigan's early unpublished poems, and what *The Tennis Court Oath* showed Berrigan was how a style could be used both to conceal and reveal those feelings.

The Sonnets bristles with contraries that are more than stylistic. Sonnet I begins with a veiled tribute to Ezra Pound, and as such is an expression of Berrigan's prodigious ambition; but the final sonnet, LXXXVIII, ends by quoting Prospero's dramatic renunciation of mastery in *The Tempest*. Making matters more complex, other sonnets incorporate lines from Berrigan's incandescent translation of Rimbaud's "Le Bateau ivre." Berrigan uses Rimbaud not only to celebrate nomadic delirium but also to express his own nostalgia for fragile things. "The only travelled sea/that I still dream of/is a cold black pond, where once/on a fragrant evening fraught with sadness/I launched a boat frail as a butterfly," he writes in Sonnet LXXIV. But two poems later, his dream-skiff abandoned, Berrigan is agonized, deflated: "I wonder if I'm too old. I wonder if I'm fooling/myself about pills. I wonder what's in the icebox. I wonder/if Ron or Pat bought any toilet paper this morning." The Berrigan who emerges from *The Sonnets* is delirious, ravaged, generous, rude, confident, doubt-ridden, tender. His defiance is rooted in his honesty and modesty, a sensibility beautifully conveyed by an image that appears in three sonnets: "my dream a crumpled horn."

The Sonnets was first published by C Press, a spinoff of the mimeographed magazine *"C" (A Journal of Poetry)*, which shortly after its founding by Berrigan in 1963 was irrigating the Lower East Side's literary scene with attitude and talent. In a sense, by making *"C"* into a gathering place for an eclectic group of artists and poets (Padgett, Ashbery, Frank O'Hara, James Schuyler, Lorenzo Thomas and Joe Brainard, among many others), Berrigan was building on the spirit of coterie that imbues *The Sonnets*, filled as it is with poems addressed to his friends ("Dear Margie," "Dear Ron," "DEAR CHRIS") and the borrowed words of other poets. During the mid-1960s Berrigan was also a charismatic presence at Le Metro coffeehouse, a popular venue for open poetry readings, as well as at the Poetry Project at St. Mark's Church, and through his involvement with *"C"* and the downtown poetry

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counterculture he earned a little fame [see Palattella, "When Poetry Was the Rage," June 16, 2003]. In 1966 Berrigan did a screen test for Andy Warhol, who later gave him a Brillo box that he used as a coffee table. At the same time, *The Sonnets* earned Berrigan some respect beyond New York. During the late 1960s and early '70s, he lived a peripatetic life, teaching at the Iowa Writers' Workshop, Yale, the University of Michigan and the University of Essex in England, where he replaced Robert Lowell.

Berrigan didn't write another book like *The Sonnets*. Although he published many other books, he never again composed poems with a book's final shape in mind. Nevertheless, he continued to write in the spirit of *The Sonnets*, always seeking to rejuvenate poetic diction through experiments in form and address. To his toolkit of found materials, the cut-up and chance methods he added experiments in rhyme, one-word poems, techniques derived from Kenneth Koch's guides to poetry writing and field composition (in which a poem's left-hand margin changes from line to line or stanza to stanza). Some poems sprawl and lunge about the page; others have a chiseled feel. Some are accomplished yet casual; others advertise their stumbles.

Throughout this incessant experimentation Berrigan's concerns remained consistent. Reading *The Collected Poems*, one is struck by how often Berrigan wrote in what can only be called a posthumous vein. In Sonnet II he mentions his dead self in the third person. After Jack Kerouac died in 1969, he wrote "Telegram"—"Bye-Bye Jack./See you soon."—an adaptation of a telegram Marcel Duchamp had sent to the dying Francis Picabia in 1953: *Francis à Bientôt* ("Francis, see you soon"). In "Last Poem," which was written four years before Berrigan's death and was not his last poem, Berrigan speaks of his dead self in the first person: "Before I began life this time/I took a crash course in Counter-Intelligence." This posthumous feeling may have stemmed from Berrigan's chronic ill health, but it's clear from the poems that it has more than a merely personal dimension. A Berrigan poem often alludes to the time of day ("Here I am at 8:08 p.m. indefinable ample rhythmic frame," begins "Red Shift") or is organized around the conceit of describing things to do, as in "Things to Do in Anne's Room" or "7 Things I Do in the Hotel Chelsea." Such forms of poetic address may sound sappy or naïve, but they are quickened into significance by the intimation of mortality always lurking in Berrigan's poems. Berrigan is an elegist of the present for whom the things one does to fill the hours and days comprise life's most important works.

I fear I've made Berrigan sound pensive and cerebral, which he is not. His poems often feature situations that seem scripted for brooding, yet he reacts to them with bursts of bathos undercut with wry self-effacement. In "Things to Do in Providence" Berrigan has returned home to visit his mother, whose own mother is dying. His sense of dislocation at his mother's house is stifling, and he tries to alleviate it by reading, turning first to *The Life of Turner* and then to "The Book of Marvels, 1934:/The year I was born./No mention of my birth in here. Hmmm." Later he takes a walk, and his long hair draws mild taunts from two teenagers: "'How'd you like a broken head, kid?'/I say fiercely./(but I am laughing & they are not one bit scared.)/So, I go home." And once there, he reflects:

> The heart stops briefly when someone dies,
> a quick pain as you hear the news, & someone passes
> from your outside life to inside. Slowly the heart adjusts

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to its new weight, & slowly everything
continues, sanely.

Berrigan recycled this stanza in "Memorial Day," a long poem written in collaboration with Anne Waldman. Because "Memorial Day" is more somber than comic, and when comic, often silly, the stanza sounds platitudinous. Because the stanza in "Things to Do in Providence" follows a series of complex comic moments, it has the ring of a genuine insight. There are several recognizable comic styles in American poetry today: intellectual fancy (Charles Bernstein), adolescent prankishness (Bill Knott) and domesticated daffiness (Billy Collins, James Tate). Read against these styles, Berrigan's comic-elegiac sensibility sounds vital and new.

Another recurring conceit in Berrigan's work is the tension between exterior and interior. Most famously there's "Night Letter," which begins: "Dear Marge, hello. It is 5:15 a.m./Outside my room atonal sounds of rain/Drum in the pre-dawn. In my skull my brain/Aches in rhythm to that pounding morning rain./In your letter, many questions. I read/them over and over." Berrigan uses the movement from exterior to interior to convey the fragility of emotional experience or a sense of panic or solitude, states he tries to endure or assuage by focusing on a thing to do, which in "Night Letter" is reading. In fact, one of the striking aspects of Berrigan's last book, *A Certain Slant of Sunlight*, is how completely this conceit had taken over Berrigan's existence by the end of his life. In 1982 an alternative press sent him 500 postcards, on which he was to write poems. The finished cards were returned a year later to the press, which distributed them singly. Berrigan was mostly bedridden when he worked on the poems, and he induced many of the friends who visited him to collaborate on postcards. (*A Certain Slant of Sunlight* contains 100 of the postcard poems.) Like the sunlight, or the news of someone's death, friends flooded from the outside into Berrigan's bedroom, and the record of their presence is the poem, which returns to the outside on a postcard.

The poems also returned Berrigan to his poetic beginnings. As in *The Sonnets*, he found himself working within strict constraints—the 4½-by-7-inch message space of the postcard. Consequently, descriptive language is spare yet vivid ("When the lilacs come I'll flip/til thrice I hear your call, darkling thrush"), and modulations in tone are abrupt yet delicate ("Hollywood// paid Lillian Gish $800,000 to/disappear so lovely so pure like milk"). Petrarch's nickname for his "Canzoniere" was *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*—"fragments of matters in common speech"—a nickname that also suits *A Certain Slant of Sunlight*, in which vivid bits of description and reflection form a crazy-quilt story about a single year in Berrigan's life.

In an homage written several years after Berrigan's death, the poet Ed Dorn remarked that Berrigan's failing "was that his subject matter was limited too often to his friends, or circle." Dorn was part of that circle and so knew of Berrigan's failing firsthand. Reading *A Certain Slant of Sunlight*, which in some moments is annoyingly parochial, it's hard to disagree with him. But Dorn's assessment didn't end on a sour note. "That limitation was also his humility, possibly his greatest strength," Dorn was quick to add. I'd go further and venture that Berrigan's humility grows in strength if one counts among his friends not just the familiars of his coterie but the poets whose work Berrigan adored, scorned, absorbed and transformed. These two groups were part of the furniture of his life and mind—a friend of Berrigan's once found the poet's desk stuffed with unpublished imitations of Shakespeare, Rimbaud, Eliot, Rilke and Auden. Poets living and dead were a special kind of company for Berrigan, one in whose presence he could test his devotion to poetry and nurture it into a vocation.

Such devotion fueled an epic ambition, one that drove Berrigan from Tulsa to Manhattan yet curiously enough didn't compel him to imitate the elders he most admired—Eliot, Williams and Pound—and endeavor to write an epic poem about the West. Instead, it led to an apprenticeship with the sonnet and then to the no-less-tricky task of writing occasional poems about love, solitude, friendship, marriage, panic, boredom and death. Indeed, thanks to this invaluable *Collected Poems*, one can hear, as never before, Ted Berrigan dreaming his dream of a crumpled horn: His is a broken instrument that can sing beautifully, and what it sings about is being broken and graceful and tough. ■

Dr. Fun

MELANIE REHAK

THE COLLECTED POEMS OF KENNETH KOCH. By Kenneth Koch. Knopf. 761 pp. $40.

"May I tell you how much I love your poems?" Frank O'Hara crowed in the first stanza of a tribute to his friend Kenneth Koch in 1953. "It's as if a great pipeline had been illicitly tapped/along which all personal characteristics/are making a hasty departure. Tuba? Gin?/...O Kenneth Koch!" Koch's memories of his writing methods at the time, which he described with typical exuberance in a poem of his own, confirm O'Hara's impression that he drew inspiration from nothing less than the entire world. "I'm excited I'm writing at my typewriter it doesn't make too much sense," he gushed, so thrilled to be putting words to paper he didn't even have a moment to spare for punctuation. Assuming his usual carefree poetic persona combined with just a dash of bemused self-mockery, Koch wrote about his creative process with the breathlessness of a man wholly in love with the universe.

At the time of all this rampant delight, Koch had just returned to New York City from a Fulbright year in Paris, joining O'Hara and their friends John Ashbery and James Schuyler in the merry band that would eventually be known as the New York School of poets. Though they were writers first and foremost, the four were also deeply immersed in the art world and entangled, both personally and professionally, with much of the emerging talent of the moment—painters like Jane Freilicher (who lived upstairs from Koch in the East Village), Larry Rivers and Willem de Kooning. Together they formed a little cosmos where intimacy and self-expression reigned. "We poets and painters hung around a lot together, showed each other our works, and were made by this camaraderie very (or more than otherwise) ambitious, envious, emulous, and, I think, lucky," Koch recalled, trying to capture the fertile, passionate bohemia of New York City in the 1950s. In a poem from the 1970s, he sound-

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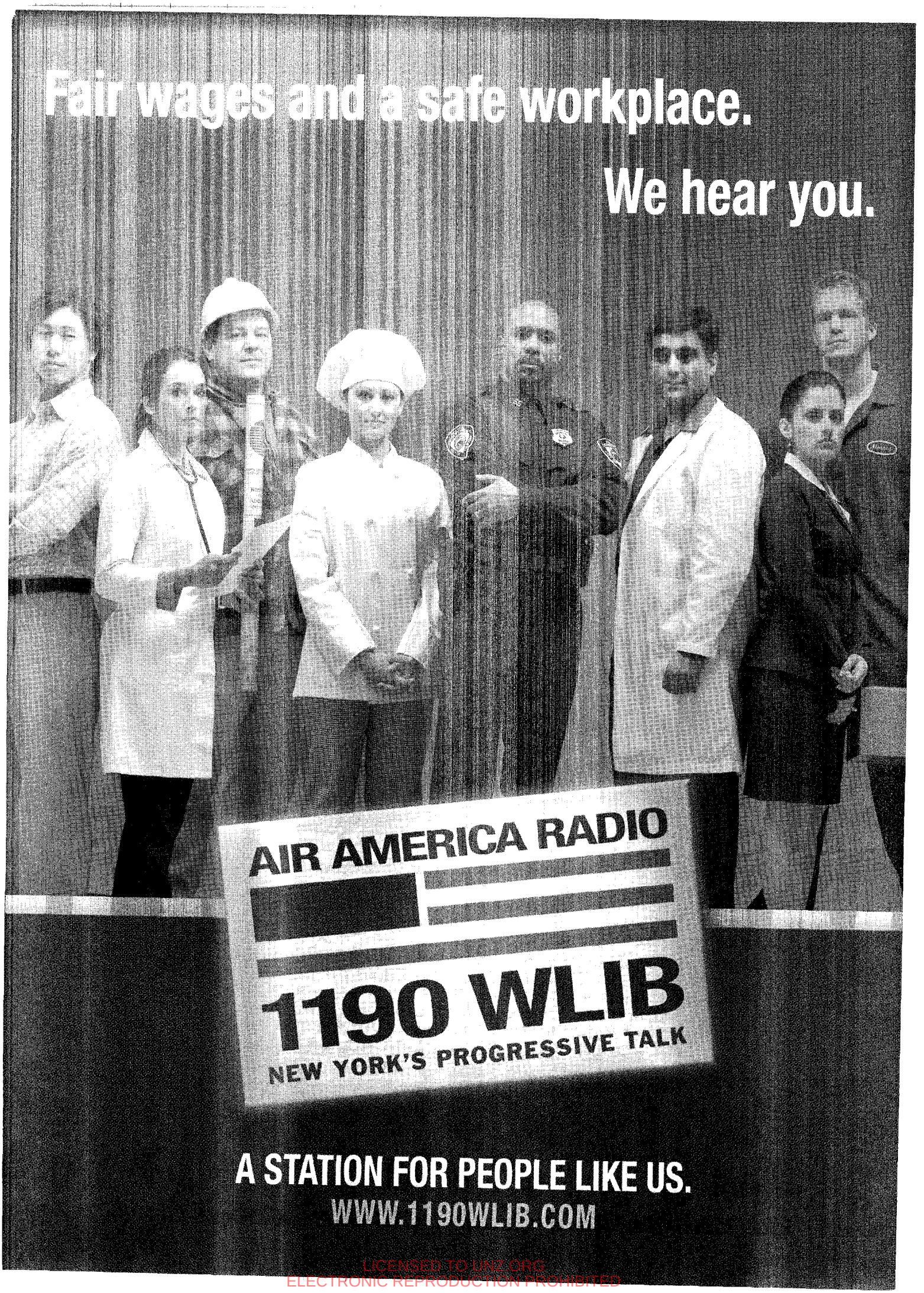

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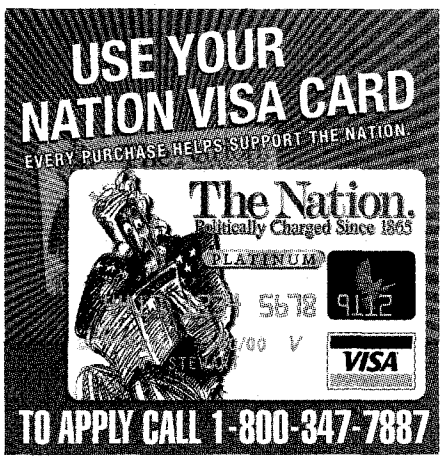

What You Do

when nobody's looking
in the black sites what you do
when nobody knows you
are in there what you do

when you're in the black sites
when you shackle them higher
in there what you do
when you kill by crucifixion

when you shackle them higher
are you still Christian
when you kill by crucifixion
when you ice the body

are you still Christian
when you wrap it in plastic
when you ice the body
when you swear it didn't happen

when you wrap it in plastic
when the dossier's been there
when you swear it didn't happen
for over a year now

when the dossier's been there
for the ghost prisoner
for over a year now
where nobody's looking

for the ghost prisoner
when nobody knows what
you do when you're in there
where nobody's looking.

Maxine Kumin

ed a more sentimental note, making it clear those years had also been a time of great romance. "My friends...meant almost more than anything to me," he reflected. "Their names alone bring tears to my eyes."

Under the influence of Abstract Expressionism and basking in the possibilities of language, Koch and his poetic cohorts were determined to subvert the dominant New Criticism of the 1950s, of which, Koch wrote, "Eliot was the Great Dictator.... One hardly dared to wink/Or fool around in any way in poems." Koch, on the other hand, wanted to have fun (and was actually nicknamed Dr. Fun by Ashbery, whom he had befriended for life when both were undergraduates at Harvard), and he went about it with a seriousness of purpose tinged with hilarity. He had come home from France with the idea that poetry was a language unto itself, and that it needed to be indulged as such. As he explained in a preface to his first book, *Sun Out*—the poems in which were written in the early 1950s but not published until after his death in 2002—he had been plunged into a happy and productive linguistic soup as he attempted to get by in French, "which I understood and misunderstood at the same time.... Words would have several meanings for me at once.... Once I began to hear them all together, [they] constituted a way of using the language that was very stirring to me and seemed to mean a lot. It gave me a strong sensation of speaking the truth."

Koch's attempts to render this multiplicity of meaning in straight English, and thereby get to the essential nature of human existence, yielded some rather odd products over the next few years. The opening lines of the title poem in *Sun Out*, for example, read like a burst of surrealist insanity: "Bananas, piers, limericks/I am postures/Over there, I, are/The lakes of delectation." What on earth is he talking about? "I wanted to keep my subject up in the air as long as possible," he explained in his preface—to which one can only respond, Job well done.

But even in his early work, there are amid the linguistic experiments flashes of pure, everyday ecstasy—that "delectation"—and in them one finds the heart of Koch's work, the immediacy that makes it irresistible. "The land is coughing, 'Joy!'" he wrote in a 1950s poem called "Highway Barns, the Children of the Road." "Hey, pavements, you charmers,/When are you going to bring me good news?" Koch was always looking for good news, and as a result he discovered it everywhere. How many other poets could write "A Poem of the Forty-Eight States" and find something to love in each and every one of them? Who else could have spun, much less thrilled to, the line: "Oh railroad stations, pennants, evenings, and lumberyards!"? His extravagant revels are infectious.

This palpable, ceaseless enthusiasm for both writing and life itself sets Koch apart from a pantheon of poets who too often forget the pleasure principle. Perhaps most important, he generously invited all of us into his neighborhood, even providing instructions for living there on occasion. "Making love must be everything," he advised in "The Art of Love." "A city, not a street; a country, not a city; the universe, the world—/Make yours so, make it even a galaxy." This bountiful tide crashes through Koch's *Collected Poems*, which comes in at more than 700 pages and is dense enough at times to be daunting to even the most dedicated reader. Still, when one considers how much Koch struggled to exclude, it's hard to hold a grudge against him. His life was a whirlwind of influences and reactions and actions and the mad rush to figure it all out. As he wrote in a long, marvelous poem called "Days and Nights":

> There are very few poems
> Compared to all the thought
> And the activity and the sleeping and
> the falling in love
> And out of love and the friendships
> And all the talk and the doubts and the
> excitement
> And the reputations and the
> philosophies
> And the opinions about everything and
> the sensitivity
> And the being alone a lot and having to
> be with others
> A lot and the going to bed a lot and
> getting up a lot and seeing
> Things all the time in relation to poetry

And just when you think you want to stop the ride and get off, Koch chimes in with a revelation so sweet and so calm that you stay on. "I want spring, I want to turn like a mobile/In a new fresh air!" he wrote in an early poem called "Desire for Spring." "O breeze, my lovely, come in, that I mayn't be stultified!"

Above all else, Koch was a poet of charm. He was so mesmerized by the world that no one can fail to be enchanted by his vision of it, not least because it rarely comes without a good dose of irony and appreciation for just how ridiculous the position of the "artist" can be if it goes to

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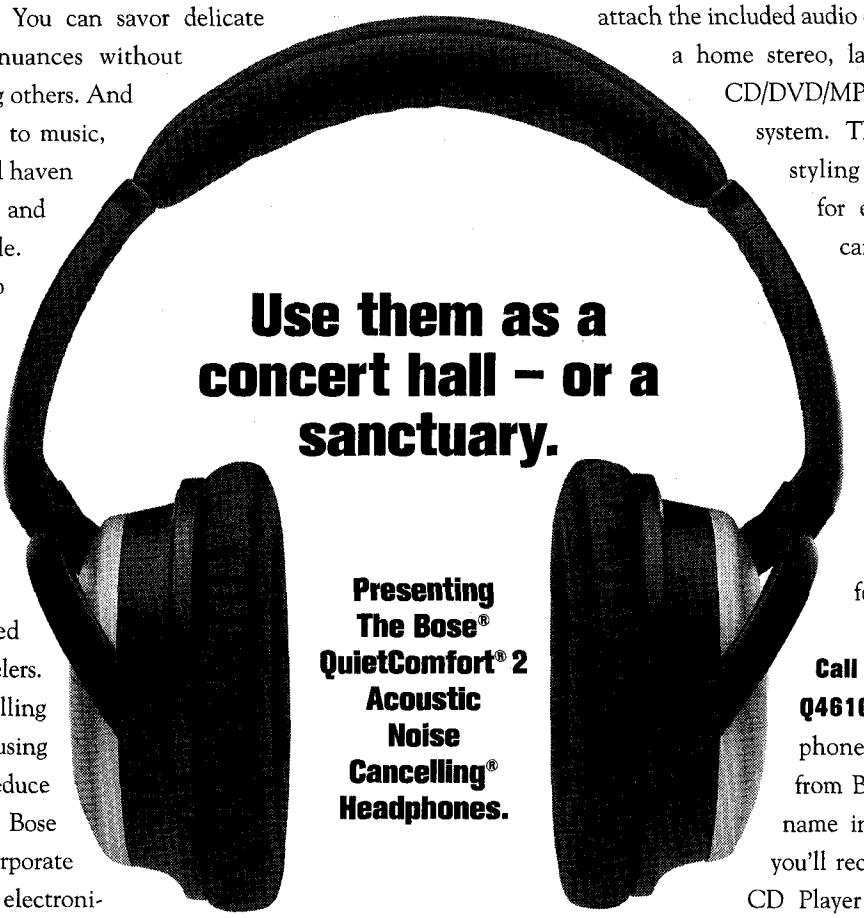

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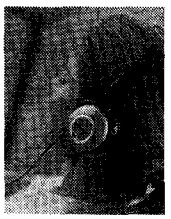

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your head. While he took his practice very seriously, and spent many years teaching poetry and the value of artistic expression in venues from nursing homes to elementary schools, Koch never gave up on the idea that verse is based, ultimately, on life. In a tiny poem called "AESTHETICS OF BEING GLORIOUS," he argued, simply, for the pleasures of beginning from one's rightfully earthbound spot: "To be glorious, take off your wings/Before you fly." In a series of poems called "In Bed" that explore, with varying degrees of sobriety, the role of this central piece of furniture to human existence, he wrote first a one-liner called "BEAUTIFUL GIRL IN BED": "Why I am happy to be here." He followed it up with a singular, deeply comic contribution to the genre of worshiping one's lady love that reminds us how silly such flights of romantic fancy can be. Marvell has nothing on the jovial spoof "OTHER POETRY BED": "Shall I compare you to a summer's bed?/You are more beautiful."

Contrary to conventional wisdom, Koch was more than a poet of comic verse, a label that dogged him throughout his life. At its best, his work captures the deep pleasures of being alive and of being fully conscious of one's own luck. There is a gentleness to his joy that in no way diminishes its force, a rare combination that reverberates in anyone fortunate enough to be open to it in all its possibility. Here is Koch, in "To My Heart at the Close of Day":

> At dusk light you come to bat
> As Georg Trakl might put it. How are you doing
> Aside from that, aside from the fact
> That you are at bat? What balls are you going to hit
> Into the outfield, what runs will you score,
> And do you think you ever will, eventually
> Bat one out of the park? That would be a thrill
> To you and your contemporaries! Your mighty posture
> Takes its stand in my chest and swing swing swing
> You warm up, then you take a great step
> Forward as the ball comes smashing toward you, home
> Plate. And suddenly it is evening.

How mournful to lose such a wellspring of loving energy. O baseball! O balmy nights! O Kenneth Koch! ■

ART

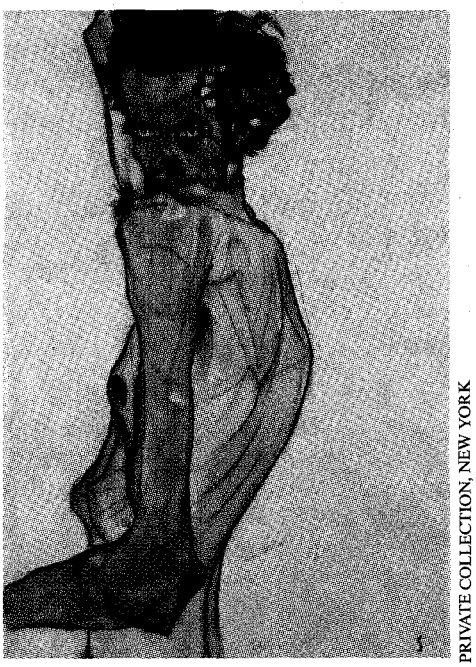
Live Flesh

ARTHUR C. DANTO

When Egon Schiele died on All Hallows' Eve in 1918, a victim of the Spanish influenza pandemic that killed 40 million people—including his pregnant wife, who had died three days before him—he was 28. Schiele had been poised to assume the position of Vienna's leading artist, having abruptly arrived at his signature style in 1910, at the age of 20. The change was more like a metamorphosis than a transformation. Schiele had been a precocious student, but nothing he did before 1910 would have prepared anyone for the singular artist he all at once became. The only parallel case that comes to mind is that of Arthur Rimbaud, writing urgent and unprecedented verse while still a schoolboy. Rimbaud and Schiele were comparable geniuses, and Schiele was in a way a *vilain bonhomme*, as Rimbaud and his drinking buddies called themselves. But Schiele's rebelliousness was part of the overall secessionist spirit that possessed twentieth-century artists impatient for official academic art to be junked and Modernism to begin.

There was nothing criminal in his character, as there had been with Rimbaud, but the extreme eroticism that marked his work—and his use of very young models—raised suspicions that he was capable of transgressive sexual acts. Indeed, he was jailed in 1912, accused of abducting and sexually abusing an underage female, while he was living in a small village outside Vienna with his long-term lover and model, Wally. At the trial the charges were refuted, but one can easily understand, on the evidence of his art, how he could be *believed* capable of sexual delinquency. The authorities found pinned to his studio wall an evidently salacious drawing of a young woman, naked from the waist down. He was sentenced to an extra three days in prison—his incarceration lasted twenty-four days in all—on the ground that he displayed an indecent picture where it could be seen by innocent eyes. The offending image was subjected to judicial destruction. Interestingly, the fact that the authorities found drawers full of similarly "indecent" images did not count against him. The offense was showing, not making, dirty pictures.

Eroticism and pictorial representation have coexisted since the beginning of art, and many great artists have a few erotic images in their "X Portfolios" (to use Robert Mapplethorpe's term). But Schiele was unique in making eroticism the defining motif of his impressive if circumscribed *oeuvre*. He was also unique in that drawing was his chief medium. Willem de Kooning said that flesh was the reason oil painting was invented, but Schiele demonstrated how remarkably fleshly thin transparent washes of pale color can be. Consider the iconic self-portrait of 1910, in which the naked artist is gazing—or glowering—at himself



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***Self-Portrait With Arm Twisted Above Head*, 1910**

in a mirror, over his left shoulder. The right arm is bent around his head, which he grasps with his hand. The fingers are abnormally long, and his face is focused in a look of intense concentration: One eyebrow is raised, the mouth is pursed in a sullen grimace. The left arm, all bone and stringy muscles, falls straight down from shoulder to a flared elbow. Whatever he is looking for in the mirror, the artist is as confident as the drawing of his arm, his outthrust rib cage, his curved back, his narrow waist. Lines of tension give definition to his body, matching the ferocity of his look. Two features call for specific comment: the wiry thatch of hair beneath his right arm—echoed by

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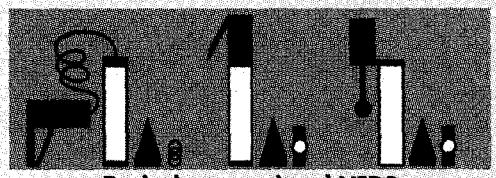

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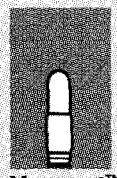

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a curl of pubic hair at the bottom of the sheet—and his right nipple, red almost to the point of blackness. These express not so much the gender as the sexuality of the body. The hair is not indicated but drawn, and the nipple suggests a target. There is a touch of red on the elbow so sure in its execution as to take one's breath away. The same red is on the cheekbones and on the finger clasped around the artist's head. There is nothing else in the self-portrait besides Schiele and the signature initial S in the lower right corner. The paper is yellowish. The figure is cropped, which heightens the intensity both of the posture and the execution. The accuracy of the drawing is confirmed by several photographs, in which Schiele contemplates himself in the mirror, clearly proud of his looks, his elegant figure, his leonine head of hair. Unquestionably, this is a vain young man.

Schiele was 20 when he drew his self-portrait. Compare it with any of the earlier drawings of nudes in the exhibition of Schiele's art on view at the Neue Galerie in New York City through February 20, and you will see instantly what I mean by the abruptness of his style. All of a sudden, and until the end of his pathetically brief career, everything is mobilized to express the sexuality of the human body. Schiele inevitably drew many naked figures in the course of his academic education. The sexual attributes are all shown. But in his final style, the whole body expresses its sexuality. If I can put it somewhat paradoxically, he has found a style that sexualizes eroticism. In Schiele's work the human body expresses its sexuality as artistic truth.

In art history textbooks, Schiele is often and carelessly labeled an Expressionist, a description intended to distinguish his eroticism from the decorative eroticism of his mentor, Gustav Klimt. Klimt, of course, depicted lovers clasped to each other in intense erotic embrace. There is nevertheless something operatic about Klimt's lovers, as if they were figures in a myth. Like Tristan and Isolde they are caught up in the sweep of passion as the music swells around them. Sex is somehow meant to be transfigurative, a way of transcending the sweaty realities of the flesh depicted. Schiele's figures, by contrast, are raw, hairy and bony, their young bodies marked by erotic zones like maps of where to touch each other. Sex is what they live for, the essence of their lives. It is an end in itself, not a means for transfiguration. They can't keep their hands to themselves when they are together, and they can't keep their hands off themselves when they are alone. Masturbation is their default state.

In their leanness, Schiele's figures might be said to resemble those of Picasso's Blue Period. But Picasso's figures are gaunt because they are poor and needy, whereas Schiele's have no thought for eating, as their only hunger is for sex. They are like illustrations of a thesis of Sigmund Freud, Schiele's fellow Viennese, that human reality is essentially sexual. What I mean to say is that there is no art-historical explanation of Schiele's vision. Expressionism was certainly in the air in *Mitteleuropa* in those years. But his drawings look like nothing one would see by artists who belong to movements like *Die Brücke* ("The Bridge") or *Der Blaue Reiter* ("The Blue Rider"). The German Expressionists used heavy black outlines and were inspired by a vision of primitivism. My own view, hardly inspired, is that Schiele expressed what Freud describes in his central thesis about human nature and conduct—that from infancy on, sex relentlessly holds us in its grip. In Schiele's work we see what we know is repressed in the men and women painted by Edvard Munch, the artist I think Schiele is closest to in terms of achievement.

The reference to Freud is not an appeal to a Viennese zeitgeist by which Schiele's work might be unpacked, although I think it says something about Vienna before World War I that eroticism was the main artistic achievement of the Austrian capital's most original artist at the time. Rather, I mean to suggest that Schiele is likely to have known about Freud's views, whose *Three Contributions to the Theory of Sex* was published in 1905. Consider Schiele's extraordinary *Mother and Child*, another drawing from 1910. The theme of mother and child has a considerable history in Western art, from Venus and Eros to the Madonna and the Christ Child, but there is nothing to compare with Schiele's study. The mother is shown from behind, looking over her shoulder, gazing back with a flirtatious glance. Her body is curved in a particularly sexy way, giving a thrust to her hips and a saucy swing to her generous buttocks. She is nude except for her black stockings, and we can see the tip of one breast from the side. The child is sitting next to her, on the arm of the chair the mother leans into. One of his hands is pressed against her waist, which he appears to be kissing with the intense fervor with which he would be sucking at the breast, if that were anatomically possible. The other hand conveys the child's total absorption in the mother's flesh. It is very much as if they are lovers—hardly a posture that would have occurred to anyone had the idea of infantile sexuality not been in the air. Schiele had drawn pregnant females at a clinic with a certain obstetrical precision. But *Mother and Child* has a moral daring,

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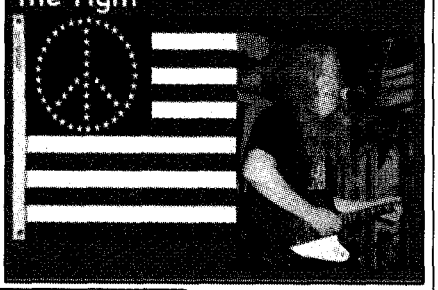

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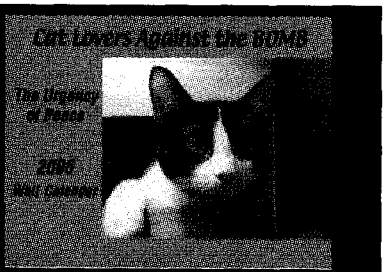

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and it expresses a psychological truth. Interestingly, the pair is surrounded by a kind of white aura, scrubbed onto the yellow of the paper, and the flesh itself is given life by the way the paint is swirled on, as in finger painting. The space where the buttocks join the thighs is punctuated by a dark cross as black as the mother's eye or hair.

Kneeling Semi-Nude, done in 1917, shows how little Schiele's style and vision had evolved over seven years. The naked upper body of the kneeling woman emerges from a voluminous frilled undergarment. She is intensely involved in palpating her left breast, holding it in her right hand while she probes above the nipple with the other hand. The round red nipple is fully exposed, and the woman is peering at it with such intensity that the celebrated male gaze of contemporary feminist theory appears by contrast to be a passing glance. Like all of Schiele's women, she is slender and beautiful, and her face is framed marvelously by tangled black curls. Lips, cheek and nipple are the only touches of red in the otherwise neutrally painted body.

With their audacious use of female underwear, boots and dark stockings, Schiele's drawings express erotic fantasies that would not have been out of place in underground postcards of the era. They are transcriptions of how Schiele and his patrons imagined sex, and they belong to the edge between pornography and art that Mapplethorpe would also explore. The images of men and women masturbating, or making love—and especially the pictures of lesbian couples—suggest to me that there was a demand for such representations, just as there was a demand for fleshy, dissolute boys in Caravaggio's Rome. That too tells us something about Schiele's Vienna, and about those who collected his work and showed it to others—and something perhaps about Freud's patients, if one insists upon a Viennese zeitgeist. What Schiele's provocations imply in terms of his own life, on the other hand, remains a mystery.

Schiele made more self-portraits than Rembrandt, and a great many pictures and portraits in the exhibition at the Neue Galerie are not overtly sexual. But the erotic work inflects everything else, as if everyone depicted *ne pensent qu'à ça*—"thinks only about that"—as the French like to say. The Neue Galerie show is, in essence, an intimate one, almost a family album, with photographs, juvenilia and toys from the artist's cabinets, and there is enough of the work that made Schiele a great artist to make us feel as if we have gotten to know him and the world to which he and his subjects belonged. Still, the title of the show, "Egon Schiele: The Ronald S.

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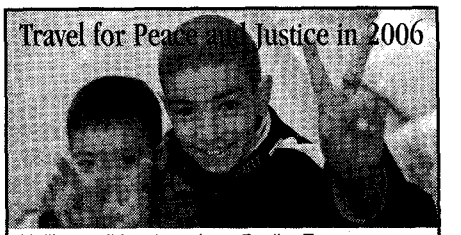

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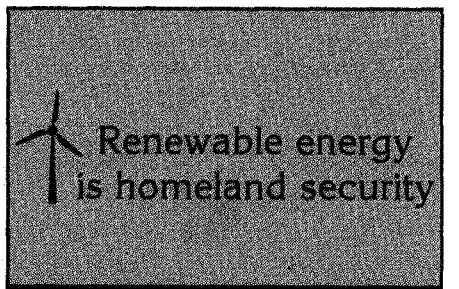

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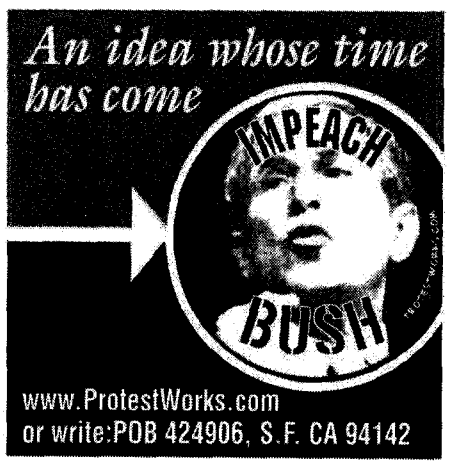

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Lauder and Serge Sabarsky Collections," makes clear that it is a double celebration. Lauder and Sabarsky founded the museum as a venue for German and Austrian art of the early twentieth century, and both were devoted to Schiele at a time when his work was widely scorned. Because it is partly about two collections, and in a way about Schiele's American reception, the show has limits that one devoted solely to the artist, borrowing from various collections here and abroad, would not have had.

There is, for example, only one of the drawings made by Schiele when he was in jail, awaiting trial and uncertain of his fate. It shows him with a beard and shaven head, leaning back on his prison pallet, wrapped in a reddish greatcoat to keep himself warm. It has the title, probably added later, *I love Antitheses* (1912). He is suffused with self-pity, and we know from his writing that he was profoundly demoralized by his prison experience. Schiele's prison images have the quality of Japanese drawings—single skinny unwavering lines define the cell doors and the prison corridor, with brooms, mops and washtubs piled in a corner and spindly branches visible through a window. This is, after all, not Sing Sing but rather a poky provincial jailhouse in Austria. If I were curating a Schiele blockbuster, I would show all the prison drawings I could lay my hands on. And I would display Schiele's extraordinary painting of his bedroom in Neulengbach, the town where he was arrested, a place almost as monastic as Vincent's bedroom in Arles. Instead of these arresting images of confinement, the Neue Galerie exhibition gives us Schiele's landscapes, which to my mind seem too opaque, lacking the transparency of his best work, his scenes of the body in its fleshly joys and torments.

It was, after all, the reinvention of men and women as sexual beings that accounts for Schiele's greatness. As Sabarsky said, "At last, Schiele is becoming contemporary," by which he meant that in terms of the representation of sexuality, the times have caught up with and almost overtaken him. Mapplethorpe is in the museums, even if our government keeps its distance from him, and frontal nudity has become commonplace on gallery walls. Yet there is no body of work anywhere that shows the sexuality of human flesh as truthfully as Schiele's, with the vulnerability and burden of our appetites and imaginations drawn so clearly and with such passion. Freud writes in *Civilization and Its Discontents* that "the genitals themselves, the sight of which is always exciting, are hardly ever regarded as beautiful." It is the excitement of the erogenous zones in otherwise beautiful people that makes Schiele's work so true. ■

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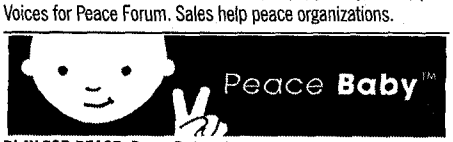

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BRONX (RIVERDALE)/WESTCHESTER, NY, *NATION* DISCUSSION Group meets one afternoon a month. For further information please phone Florence Gold at (718) 549-1601.

INTERESTED IN JOINING THE HOUSTON *NATION* DISCUSSION group? Contact Charles Mauch at (713) 524-2492 or e-mail chasmauch@aol.com.

POLICY

END THE DRUG WAR. See www.CommonSenseDrugPolicy.org, www.DrugWarFacts.org, www.DRCNet.org, www.MedicalMJ.org, www.DrugSense.org, www.AddictInTheFamily.org.

POSITIONS AVAILABLE

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS CENTER, a 26-year-old policy studies center located in Silver City, New Mexico, is looking for a visionary Executive Director. See ad online at www.irc-online.org/jobs/ed.php.

***NATION* STUDENT OUTREACH:** Attention student activists! If you're involved in organizing a progressive event, lecture or film festival on your campus or in your community and would like to distribute copies of *The Nation*, please let us know by calling (212) 209-5416.

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PSYCHOTHERAPY

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NEW YORK THERAPIST, twenty years' clinical and university-based experience. Separation and divorced parenting; divorced fathers. Individual, family and couples. Bill Dineen, LCSW. (917) 566-4785.

(JUNG/FREIRE) RELATIONSHIP(S), History, Gender, Archetype(s). Paul Stein, CSW, PhD. 32nd and Park, (646) 709-8634.

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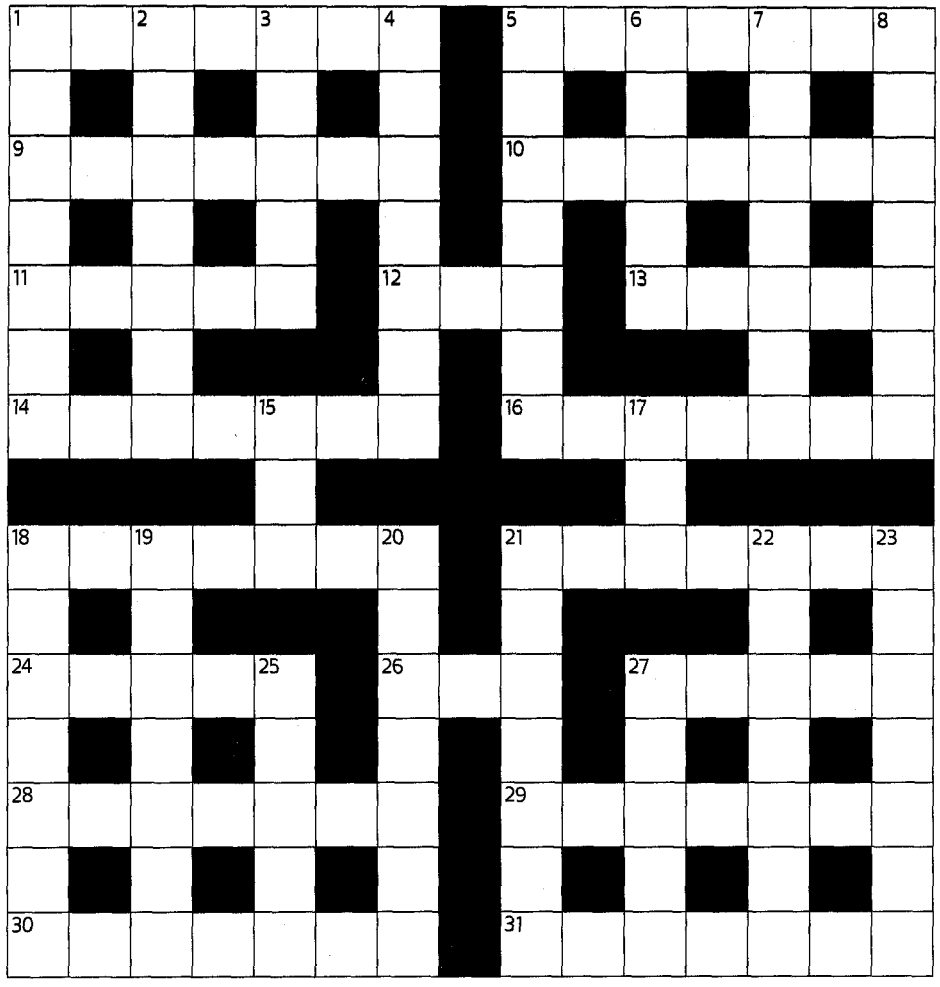
PUZZLE NO. 3018

FRANK W. LEWIS



ACROSS

1 If you want to scare people this way, begin with the French. (7)

5 For a short month, I get to be loved at first—which seems to be a sound measure. (7)

9 A room in the basement perhaps has a straight mark to show how you should stretch out. (7)

10 The night type is often used to catch something, but may also be found in the nursery. (7)

11, 12 and **13** Bill may be taken care of at this time—sometimes suggesting an "Ember Day." (3,2,3,5)

14 Falls again improperly on the old god. (7)

16 The direction the worst type of housing takes for "diggers"? (7)

18 Might be associated with an organ, or perhaps a molar. (7)

21 "Brass" may be the more Anglicized form. (7)

24 A "big shot" once, coming back to outlaw a returning personal offensive offering, as they said... (5)

26 and **17** down Such an effort may be too late, if everyone is declared not safe. (3,3)

27 A tipped-over canoe in a lot of water. (5)

28 Typified by the Renaissance, the two heads of Britain come back with their makeup. (7)

29 Implies noses in the air, lifted up by the so-called best people, being a little over 50 in bad times. (7)

30 The highland girl has an Oxford English Dictionary when caught. (7)

31 He wants to be different, but ends up in the ballet. (3,4)

DOWN

1 and **18** Instructions to the head of the army to "move ahead!"—given by the Chief Medical Officer. (7,7)

2 This lovely spot had to be vacated, with a bow to a rising assistance. (7)

3 If the change is warranted, it could be a character from Baghdad. (5)

4 What's the point to a bad cartel acting like one of the stars in the Pleiades? (7)

5 What the prisoner is sometimes put in gets set incorrectly, which shows which cases are coming up. (7)

6 How one might positively state a number must wind up with the mail to be sorted. (5)

7 Before the Common Era, Ms. Turner is upset and stays inside to keep everything in equilibrium. (7)

8 Doesn't seem to be able to walk straight when traps are set around the little children. (7)

15 What you have to do to put two and two together, and notice another number. (3)

17 See 26 across

18 See 1 down

19 I am getting what the sloppy kid needs, getting different directions when he takes in things this way. (7)

20 Got some place with every single one in debt, evidently. (7)

21 Most sacred, or just with more things that need mending? (7)

22 Look ahead of time, when everything starts in a broken wiper. (7)

23 It's only a game for some people, but one wouldn't want to be held in suspense by such a guy. (7)

25 One might give you a rough ride, when someone like Aaron gets nothing for it. (5)

27 Nothing has such a vile, vile makeup as that which some put in your drink! (5)

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 3017

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**Source: "Lighting the Way to Energy Savings"; 1999

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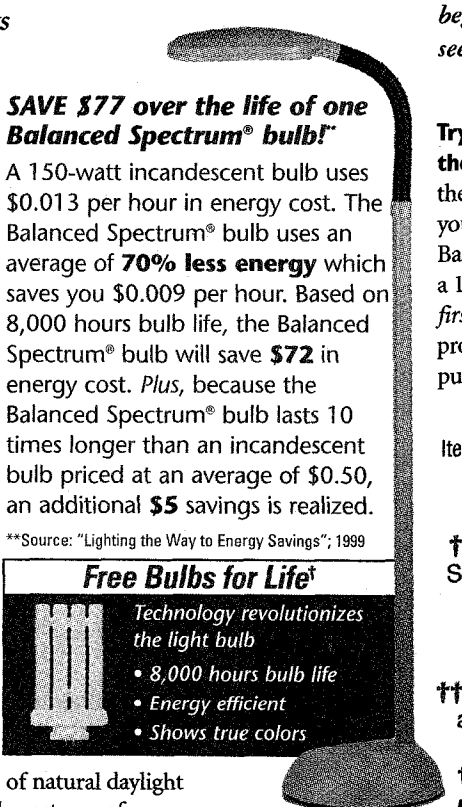

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